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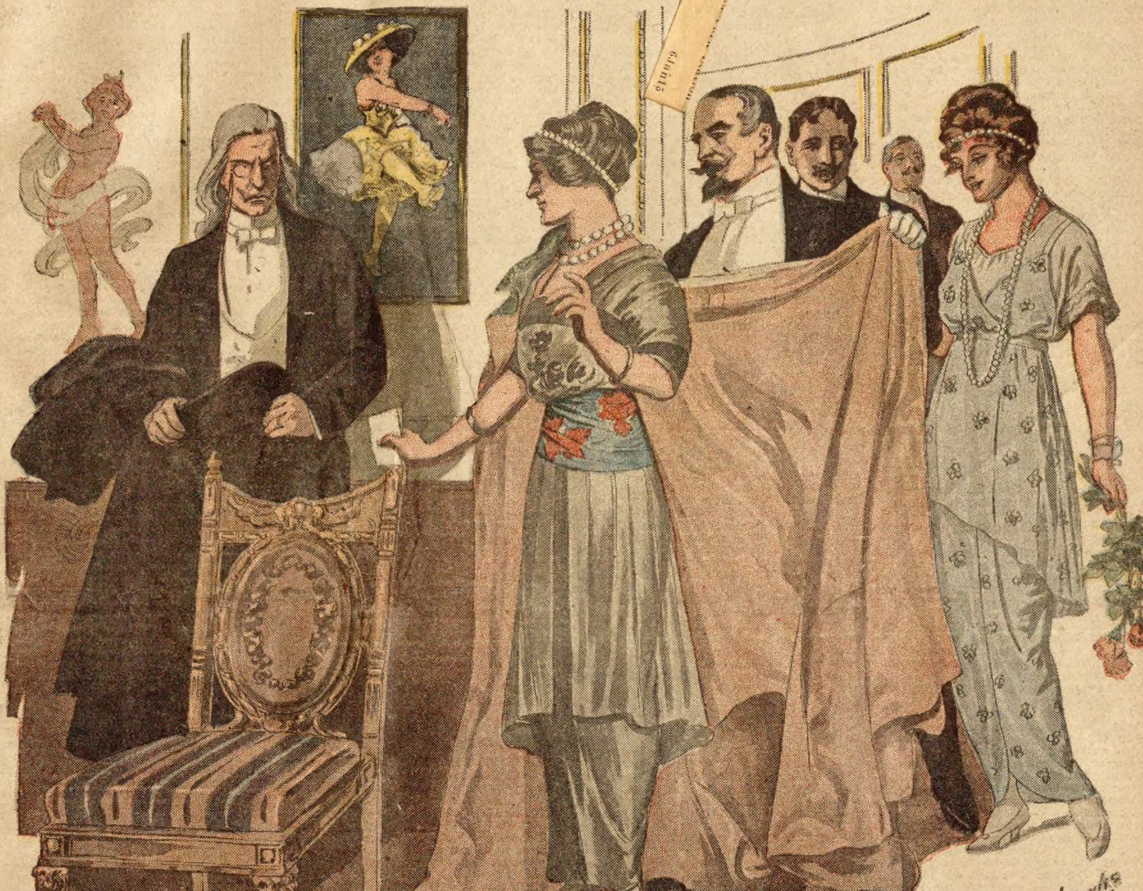

The Count's Revenge

Or, AN EYE FOR AN EYE

By Adrienne Roucolle

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CHAPTER I.

THE COUNT OF MYSTERY.

THERE was something about the stranger which filled one with vague uneasiness. The snow-white hair, shining in abundant curls above the swarthy pallor of the olive skin, did not so much indicate age as it did sorrow—one of those sorrows which scar the very soul. Yet, in the cruel fold of the thin, tightly drawn lips, and in the hard glitter of the steely gray eyes, one could also see that the man was one who would never forgive, never relent, so that in the game of life he was fully capable of returning blow for blow, suffering for suffering. A close observer could see that the man was in open rebellion with God and humanity, and that from the dead fragments of his heart could spring neither love nor pity.

He had arrived in Luchon, that most fashionable watering-place of Southern France, some two weeks before, had registered at the Grand Hotel under the name of Count Paolo del Sarto, and since then had become a feature at the Casino, where he gambled with a recklessness which made him as much the central point of attraction as did his striking and unusual personality on the streets and on the different noted promenades.

He had arrived alone with the exception of a dark, foreign-looking servingman, who seemed to understand his master's wishes before he had time to express them in words. The servant followed him everywhere, watchful, respectful, ever on the alert, his big, mournful eyes following the Count's slightest movement with that expression of mute adoration to be seen in the gaze of a faithful dog.

Though seemingly unaware of the fact, Count del Sarto soon became the most observed and most talked-of man in the fashionable resort, which, because of the early season, was not yet crowded with its motley mob of health and pleasure-seekers. Every day he aroused more curiosity and speculation as it became known that curiosity would not be easily satisfied because of the stranger's proud hauteur and the frigid manner with which he met any attempt at friendliness. He had certainly not imbibed the atmosphere of the watering-place, where friendships start and end with the outing.

Aside from the fact that his name was Count del Sarto, that he was a faultless dresser, that he spent money like a prince, and that he had come to Luchon from Milan, nothing was known of the stranger, who, though he had been at the Grand Hotel for two weeks, had not yet spoken to half a dozen people outside of the hotel employes. Alone with his manservant, scorning the use of a guide, he had visited the main points of interest; had ascended the Pic de Bown, the Pic Posets and the Pic Russell. The daring with which he had ventured out alone on these difficult ascents had naturally increased the interest he had already aroused by his seeming eccentricities and his open disregard of the usual social amenities. The French love to nickname, so the stranger was soon known as the Count of Mystery, "Le Comte Mysterieux." If Del Sarto was aware of this by-name, nothing in his actions betrayed the fact. He remained the same cold, silent, unsocial personage.

Returning late one night from the hard and perilous ascent of the Tusse de Maupas, Count del Sarto had ordered his servant in Italian the moment they had alighted from their horses:

"Go look at the registers, Guilio. It is time he arrived."

The man bowed and without a word left his master, who, knowing that his order would be faultlessly executed, went up to his room, where, after removing the dirt of the hard ride, he dressed for the evening in spite of the fact that for fifteen hours he had toiled either afoot or on horseback over rocky mountain roads. When Guilio returned, some twenty minutes later, he found Count del Sarto in faultless evening attire, waiting for him.

"Monsieur de Beaufort arrived this morning, senor," announced the servant in Italian.

"Where is he stopping?"

"Hotel des Princes, senor."

"He used to come to the Grand. Why should he change?" A troubled frown contracted Count del Sarto's brow.

"I was surprised also, senor, and fearing he might suspect something, I made inquiries, senor," answered the servant.

"Well?" The cold voice did not betray any of the anxiety expressed in the steely eyes which had narrowed in an effort of thought.

"The reason why Monsieur de Beaufort chose the Hotel des Princes is because his son's fiancee, Mademoiselle Jeanne de Cranville, and her parents are stopping there."

"I see." Then with less tension in face and pose he questioned further: "Is his son with him?"

"Yes, senor."

"Has the engagement been formally announced?"

"No, senor, the families are waiting the return to Toulouse before making it public."

"How long do they intend staying in Luchon?"

"Only one month, senor, since Monsieur de Beaufort was officially notified of his appointment as judge d'instruction [examining judge] at Toulouse and he must return to prepare for the fall term of the Cour d'Assises."

A cruel smile curled the Count's thin lips, revealing the sharp, white teeth, giving to the face the appearance of a snarling, vicious dog, as he asked in almost fiendish delight:

"So he has accepted the appointment?"

"Yes, senor."

"Then he is mine, Guilio, mine, do you hear?" The man's cold hauteur vanished under the unholy wave of cruel joy which surged over his revengeful heart, as pacing the room in nervous strides, he continued aloud, heedless of the listening servant, so sure he was of his devotion: "At last I have him! He cannot escape me now! I suppose he rejoices over the honor of the appointment, little dreaming, poor fool, that it was given him through the ceaseless efforts of the man he has injured beyond pardon. Rejoice, Jacques de Beaufort, rejoice while you may, for the blow is about to fall. Tnen it shall be between us a war to a finish, merciless as death itself!"

Guilio listened to this outburst in silence, knowing enough of the French laws to realize the importance of the appointment of judge d'instruction which gave to Monsieur de Beaufort the great responsibility of conducting all criminal investigations, the tracking down of criminals, as well as the preparation of the cases which later the District Attorney would present to the court. The very responsibility of the position showed also the possibilities these might give a clever enemy to disgrace and blacken the one who held it. Though the master had not yet made known his plans to the confidential servant, the man had gathered enough from the scattering remarks which occasionally escaped the Count's vigilance to guess that these plans were deep and dark and merciless; but being devoted body and soul, to the man he loved with such blind fidelity, Guilio was ready for any deed, any criminal act that might be asked of him.

Count del Sarto's outburst lasted but a minute. Then he became again the cold, sphinxlike being he appeared to the outside world, the servant being the only person who was ever given the chance of viewing the turbulent though repressed nature concealed beneath the unemotional and frigid exterior. Calming down suddenly, Count del Sarto asked in his usual passionless voice:

"Do you know where Monsieur de Beaufort is to spend the evening?"

"Yes, senor. The De Granvilles are going to attend the concert at the Casino, and Monsieur de Beaufort and his son are to accompany them. At least, that is what Monsieur de Beaufort's valet told me."

"You must become that man's friend, Guilio, as he may prove useful in the future. If you need more money with which to buy that frienaship, don't hesitate to ask for it." Speaxing thus, Count del Sarto began putting on his gloves.

"Oh, the senor master gives me plenty of money for our present purposes," answered Guilio, "for all that Jean wants is some one who pays for the drinks and buys the cigars."

"Very well. If he should require more later, you can call on me."

Count del Sarto took up his hat and cane and made toward the door.

"Is senor going out tonight after the fatigues of our hard day?" asked Guilio timidly.

"I am never tired when I have work to do, Guilio," answered the Count with a strange flash in the eagle eye.

"Does the senor want me to accompany him?"

"It is not necessary for tonight, since I am only going to attend the concert at the Casino, and maybe drop in for a time in the gambling parlors. Don't wait up for me; as it is impossible to state how late, or rather how early, it will be when I come home."

Count del Sarto left the room, causing Guilio to shake his head half regretfully, as he muttered to himself, a habit he had acquired during the months of solitary confinement in an Italian prison from which Count del Sarto had finally rescued him, thus winning the absolute devotion of the one he had freed:

"And to think he could be so happy if he only forgave and forgot." Then, with an expressive shrug of the shoulders, the servant continued, rather amused, "Rather a queer thought for me to have. This idea of forgiveness was not in my line, as I so well proved. The master must have enough Italian blood in him, since he does not pardon until he has been avenged. Well, from the looks of things there'll soon be work to do." And Guilio began arranging the room which the Count's haste in dressing had left in disorder.

Meanwhile Count del Sarto was walking with thoughtful rapidity toward the Casino. He knew it was too late for him to secure a good view of each newcomer as he entered the concert-room, and he feared to trust his memory to pick out in the crowded auditorium the man he had not seen in twenty years, though in the depths of his revengeful heart something seemed to tell him that he would know his enemy among thousands. Still, not wanting to take any chances, eager to see De Beaufort that very night, he decided to wait outside the concert-room, and scan carefully each passing face until he found the one for which he searched.

Arriving at the Casino, Count del Sarto, apparently unconscious of the impression his presence produced, began walking back and forth before the doors of the concert-room. A woman's voice was ringing a love song, the clear, bell-like notes coming out to him through the closed doors, bringing back to his heart many tender memories of another woman's voice, les operatic than the one now singing, but which in the happy past had filled him with the raptures of love, a love that nothing had been able to lessen, which time and death itself had not changed. As he thought, his face became a shade paler, the eyes more steely and cruel, the lips more tightly drawn over the sharp teeth, which bit at the unlit cigar with a grating, ominous sound. It was this overpowering love of the past which tonight was causing Count del Sarto to start active work on a vengeance which he had been twenty years planning and arranging, waiting patiently until the time was ripe for the blow to fall. Like a bloodhound following a scent, he had followed day by day the career of the one who in years gone by had robbed him of his happiness. Tonight, as he felt the scent getting warmer, as he realized that he had about reached the goal, the past, with its joys and its horrible tragedy, surged over his soul in a flow of combined sweetness and bitterness.

Thus he waited until the concert was over, and the gay, fashionable audience began to come out in bright, animated, chattering groups. The moment the doors were opened, Count del Sarto chased the past from him to give to the present all of his attention. Though immovable and seemingly indifferent, the man's very soul was alive with desire and intentness as the luminous gray eye scanned each passing group in search of a face, the memory of which had been scarred on the tablets of his brain by the terrible incident which had wrecked his life and made of him tne cruel, heartless maniac whose one aim, one thought, was revenge.

Suddenly his heart stood still. There, in a group, one face stood out with luminous distinctness. It was that of a man past middle age, still handsome, though lines of care or dissipation seamed the ruddy skin and streaked with gray the abundant mass of dark brown hair. It was smiling in happiness, that face for which the silent watcher had been looking. A cruel joy came to the revengeful heart as he realized how short that happiness was to be and how much more bitter the coming misery would seem because of the present joy.

After satisfying himself with one swift glance that he had found the one for whom he was searching, Count del Sarto turned his attention to the four other persons accompanying Monsieur de Beaufort. Following the gaze of his enemy, the Count saw that it was fixed in fatherly admiration on the blooming face of a young girl whose dainty hand rested lightly on the arm of a young man of some twenty-five or twenty-six years of age. There was no mistaking the look in the young man's eyes as he gazed at the girl by his side, causing Count del Sarto to think, as an evil light shone in his eyes:

"It is evident that the De Beauforts, father and son, are satisfied with the future Madame de Beaufort." Then turning his attention to the distinguished elderly couple who were evidently with the interesting group, he realized that the De Granvilles were as satisfied with the coming marriage as were the De Beauforts, and his joy increased since he saw that this satisfaction could give rise to further complications he had not hoped it would be his good fortune to create, when working out the details of his vengeance. Fate seemed to be with him in his diabolic plans, which if carried out to the limit, would wreck the five lives of the now perfectly happy group, not one of whom guessed that it would be possible for anything to mar their present or future happiness.

Count del Sarto let them pass him and lose themselves among the crowd, remaining motionless in his place until the silence about him recalled him to himself and he realized that the last spectator had left the concert-room, the doors of which had been closed by the attendants, who, after eying the motionless man, had gone about their work, as they recognized the Count of Mystery, at the strangeness of whose actions people had ceased to wonder.

Returning to himself with a start, Count del Sarto left the Casino, and for several hours, unconscious of fatigue, he walked the streets of Luchon, for once forgetful that he had a body whose muscles could tire, living only in the excited dream of his fiendish vengeance. Toward morning he returned to his hotel, undressed and went to bed, falling almost immediately into a torpor-like sleep, from which he did not awaken until late in the afternoon.

CHAPTER II.

THE SHADOW OF THE PAST.

WITH his first waking thought, Count del Sarto remembered the plan he had figured out during the long tramp of the night before. A smile of satisfaction curled his lips, as for a few seconds he lay still with closed eyes, enjoying in anticipation all the misery he was going to cause. Then realizing that he had no time to lose, he jumped from his bed and called the faithful Guilio, who was waiting his master's waking in the sitting-room adjoining, having looked in several times to see if the Count had awakened. The minute Guilio entered the bedroom, Count del Sarto ordered:

"Bring me up something to eat, then pack your grip. You leave for Milan tonight."

Though evidently surprised, Guilio did not question as to the cause of this sudden departure, merely asking:

"Does the senor want his grip packed also?"

"No; you go alone."

"Shall I look up the departure of the trains?"

"You had better, since I would like you to try to make the next train tnat leaves Luchon, as I shall expect you back within a week."

Guilio did not question further. He hurried from the room with that eagerness to obey which was one of the characteristics of his devotion for Count del Sarto. The Count hastened to dress, then, going into the sitting-room, sat down at the desk and began to write.

He was sealing the letter he had just written when the confidential servant returned with the meal ordered and the information that the next train left in an hour.

"I'll eat while you pack," said Count del Sarto, as he unfolded his napkin and began eating with rapid activity, it being evident that he ate merely to keep up his strength and not through any special enjoyment of the tempting viands set before him, since his brain was too busy to give him the leisure of enjoying the material satisfactions of life.

When Guilio returned ten minutes later dressed for travel, a small grip in one hand and a raincoat over the other arm, Count del Sarto had finished his meal, and rising, he said as he handed the servant the letter he had written:

"You'll give this letter to my daughter. It tells her my wishes. Return with her, and see that she does not lose too much time in getting ready. I shall expect you both back by the last of this week, or at the latest by the beginning of next."

"Do you suppose Senorita Francesca will be willing to leave the convent? She told me she intended to take the veil."

"She will have to change her intentions, then," came the hard reply, "since I intend she shall marry." Then abruptly: "Have no fear, she will not refuse to follow you after reading my letter."

"Very well, senor. Is there anything further?"

"Yes. Wire me the day you leave Milan for France, stating the hour of the train, that I may know when to expect you. Now, Guilio, see that you don't miss your train."

"Adieu, then," said Guilio, and without further questions or remarks he left Count del Sarto, arriving at the station in plenty time to make his train, mentally wondering why the Count should thus send for his daughter, in whom he had so far taken very little interest, calling her to him at a time when it seemed that a young woman would be in the way.

The morning after Guilio's departure for Milan, Count del Sarto, dressed in the most faultless of morning attire, went to the Hotel des Princes and sent up his card to Monsieur de Beaufort with the request for a private interview. Though the name on the card was unknown to him, Monsieur de Beaufort sent down word to his visitor that he would see him in half an hour, having some important correspondence to attend to which would take him that long to finish. Count del Sarto answered that he would be pleased to return, and, lighting a cigar, he took a short stroll to the Quinconces, returning at the close of the half-hour.

Though outwardly calm and impassive as ever, the Count was filled with a conflict of feelings and emotions which caused his heart to leap in his bosom, which of a sudden seemed to have become too narrow to contain it. Sending up his card once more, he was immediately admitted to De Beaufort's private sitting-room, where he found his enemy in elegant negligee, awaiting him. With the first look Monsieur de Beaufort cast on him, Count del Sarto realized that he had not been recognized, for the look in De Beaufort's questioning eyes was one of well-bred curiosity mingled with a certain degree of satisfaction, as the outward appearance of the visitor assured the fastidious nobleman that he was dealing with a gentleman.

Rising, Monsieur de Beaufort took a few steps toward the newcomer; then with a courteous bow, he indicated a chair to the visitor with his long white hand and said with the perfect though proud courtesy which was one of his characteristics:

"Count del Sarto, I believe?"

"Yes, Monsieur de Beaufort," returning the other's bow with equal courtesy.

The two men took seats, and for a few minutes there was silence, each considering the other without speaking, both wondering what the cold, impassive face before him concealed of thoughts and impressions. Though De Beaufort was not consciously aware of the fact, this silence was the mental arraying of the forces of the two souls at the opening of this battle where one was to fight to defend his honor, the other to achieve his revenge. Count del Sarto was the first to speak, saying in his hard voice:

"I suppose you were surprised to receive my card, Monsieur de Beaufort?"

"Not as much surprised as curious to know to what I owe the honor of the visit."

"I am the bearer of a letter which once belonged to you, Monsieur de Beaufort, a letter I should no doubt have remitted years ago, but which my rather checkered career did not give me the opportunity to deliver until now." While speaking, Count del Sarto had taken a portfolio from his pocket and had carefully drawn out an envelope yellowed with age. This he handed to Monsieur de Beaufort with a look which put one in mind of a cat playing with a mouse.

The minute Monsieur de Beaufort caught sight of the handwriting and the name on the envelope, a pallor of death overspread his face, the correct nobleman vanished, and in his place appeared a terror-stricken individual whose wildly-opened eyes stared from the letter to the one who had given it to him in a panic of mad fear which left him without strength either to move or to speak.

We advise you to read "The Count's Revenge; or, An Eye for an Eye," in this issue. It is a most strange and fascinating story. Next week's Ledger will contain a fine Out West story called "Hold-Up Versus Hold-Out," and a new and splendid boy's story of circus life, entitled, "From Ring to Ridge Pole." Read them by all means.

Sitting back in his chair, apparently not noticing the other's emotion, Count del Sarto waited in silence, a simple heightening of color on the swarthy pallor of his cheek and a more luminous glow in the eye betraying his enjoyment of his victim's suffering. Finally Monsieur de Beaufort managed to ask:

"Where—where did you get this letter?"

"From the dead body of your victim, Monsieur de Beaufort," came the thundering reply. Both men rose to their feet, facing each other, Count del Sarto's eyes glaring with their first show of revengeful hate, before the flaming look of which De Beaufort cowed in increasing terror, suddenly aware that the man before him was an enemy until death. Weakly he demanded:

"My victim! What do—you mean?"

"Your pallor and the trembling of your limbs tell me that you know what I mean, you vile blackmailer, you unprincipled pursuer of a weak, defenseless woman who finally killed herself to escape your merciless war against her happiness and her honor."

The voice which spoke these stinging words was calm as in ordinary conversation. The one outburst of feeling which had escaped Del Sarto had subsided, leaving him as impassive and cool as the man he was accusing was disturbed and terror-stricken.

Count del Sarto had resumed his seat, playing idly with one of the gloves he had removed, narrowly watching the working face before him, guessing as though it had already been spoken the trembling question which finally came in halting, breathless suspense from Monsieur de Beaufort's livid lips:

"Who—who are you, that you know that secret of the past?"

For fully twenty seconds Count del Sarto looked full in the anxious, troubled eyes, then he answered slowly, a pause between each word:

"I am the husband of the woman you drove to death."

"It's a lie," broke from Monsieur de Beaufort, "Andre de Narville is dead; he died in a wreck at sea!"

"Was his body ever found?" The question was abrupt and tense.

"No, but a wreck like that seemed to give every proof that he had died with the rest of his companions." Monsieur de Beaufort was stammering in increasing fright, as little by little the consciousness that the sphinxlike man before him might be telling the truth came over him and chilled him with terror.

"Look closely at my features, Monsieur de Beaufort, more closely than you have so far, and see if your brain has not as good a memory as mine. I knew you the minute I saw you!"

Staring at the grimly triumphant man before him, Monsieur de Beaufort by a powerful effort of memory was able to reconstruct from the dim impressions which time had left upon his brain, the remembrance of the features of the one whose life he had wrecked in the past. Looking again at the Count, the striking resemblance between this mental picture and that of the living face struck him like a blow, and he fell back to his chair with a groan of intense despair.

"I am glad to see that you do remember," was Count del Sarto's only remark, followed by a silence which to the crushed and terror-stricken De Beaufort seemed to last hours.

Finally making a powerful effort with himself, realizing as he did that the greater appeared his terror and weakness the more relentless and sure of himself would his enemy become, Monsieur de Beaufort sat up in his chair, stiffened his quivering muscles into a semblance of strength, and, in tones to which his desire to make steady and strong gave a rasping sound, he asked:

"What do you intend doing?"

"Return eye for eye, tooth for tooth," came the unbending reply. "As you have done so shall you be done by. Because you chanced to know of a fault in my poor wife's past, you used that knowledge to torture her to a point which finally drove her to suicide; when no longer satisfied with mere money, you insisted on the giving up of herself to your debasing passion as a price for your silence! No matter what she had done in the past, she loved me then with that all-powerful love which makes a woman faithful, and rather than be false to me, she died, knowing well you could not collect from the corpse the toll of shame you would have demanded of the living woman."

"It was an error of youth," pleaded Monsieur de Beaufort, in choking tones. The word-picture just drawn of his villainy of the past struck his soul with its first pangs of remorse. "A man should not be held responsible for the mad follies of the unthinking youth blinded with love for a beautiful woman he desired."

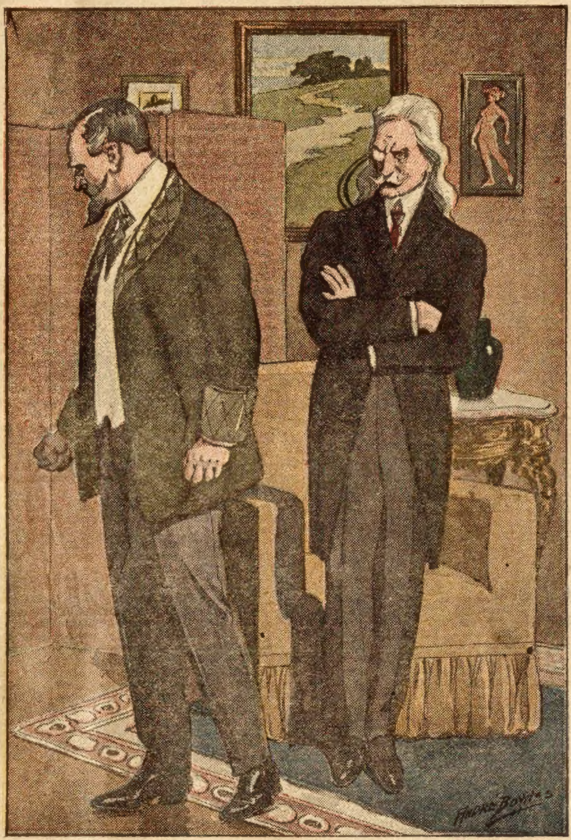
"You did not love her, for then you would not have made her suffer."

"You are right; my feeling was that of mere passion, for which reason it was less easy to repress or conquer, and therefore should be more readily pardoned, when one takes into consideration the hot blood of youth which clouds the heart as it rouses the senses and changes the man into the brute!"

A bitter laugh interrupted him, a laugh which to his ears had the hiss of the serpent. Then Count del Sarto said:

"I wonder how far that lame excuse would go with your friends and acquaintances, with your new colleagues at the tribunal, if given in connection with the story of the past. Do you suppose it would lessen in the eyes of the world your villainy and the shame it shall always attach to your name?"

Terror-stricken, Monsieur de Beaufort looked at his tormentor, as something of Count del Sarto's plans came to his numb brain and froze the blood in his veins. If the sin of the past became known to the world, he would be forever disgraced, his name blackened with a stigma of shame nothing could wash off.



"From the dead body of your victim!"

In his cold, selfish way he had always been proud of his name, which commanded respect and admiration wherever he went because of the glorious memories it evoked in those acquainted with the history of France. To its wars, to its science, to its literature his ancestors had brought more than their quota of glory. And now he, the proud Jacques de Beaufort, would bring to that name without stain its first shame! Never! As his victim of the past had wanted to guard her honor unsullied in her husband's eyes, so he now wanted to keep from the world the disgrace of his past sins, which would go from him to his son and on and on for all generations to come. There was enough of the old-time nobleman left in him to make him ready to sacrifice everything for the sake of the name.

In the realm of the physical, excessive terror will sometimes nerve the heart to unexpected deeds of courage, so in the mental world the shock of a great dread will force a manifestation of outward calm and bravery. So it was with Monsieur de Beaufort. Realizing the full imminence of the danger, his quaking terror left him, he became suddenly calm, the shrewd lawyer and justice replacing in a second the affrighted, conscience-stricken man who found himself confronted by a nearly-forgotten sin. Almost indifferently, he asked:

"What is the price of your silence?"

CHAPTER III.

THE PRICE OF SILENCE.

COUNT DEL SARTO did not at once reply, somewhat at a loss to understand the cause of the unexpected change of manner in the man facing him; but after looking fixedly for a few seconds into the haunted eyes which tried to return his look, he saw in their troubled depths the lurking glimmer of the awful fear which still filled the craven heart. He smiled as he realized that the outward calm was a weak armor which his victim was trying to cast over his terror so that the one who held him in his power might not know the real extent of that power.

"Before I answer your question, Monsieur de Beaufort," said the Count, with maddening slowness, as he drew a cigar-case from his pocket and lit a cigar with insolent nonchalance, "I believe it is necessary for me to tell you something of my life since the time when my supposed death led you to believe that you were free from the oath of vengeance you knew I had taken. It will aid you to better understand the reason for the demand I am going to make."

"I prefer that you come down to facts, Monsieur de Narville, I can guess at the reasons. What is your price?"

Monsieur de Beaufort's evident desire to know his fate at once showed the Count a new way of torturing his victim by lengthening the suspense, so he answered abruptly:

"From now on, Monsieur de Beaufort, it shall not be what you prefer, but what I wish. Remember what you used to do twenty years ago."

The shiver which escaped De Beaufort's vigilance showed Count del Sarto that his dart had taken effect; and seeing that Monsieur de Beaufort did not speak, no doubt afraid to trust his voice, he continued:

"When I came upon the dead body of the only woman I had loved or ever will love, and I read her farewell note in which she had inclosed your last letter to her, making the infamous demand of her honor in exchange for your silence, something died within me, and from that day to this, though outwardly human in form and actions, I have nothing in common with humanity. I am a fiend in the full, the complete sense of the word; I have lived for revenge alone; that tells you I shall never forgive."

These terrible words were spoken slowly, calmly, with the high bred indifference of a gentleman engaged in ordinary conversation, but the very calm of the utterance made them all the more ominous, chilling the blood of the listener.

"For hours I thought out my future course of action, as alone with my dead I judged and sentenced you. To make known to the world your treachery at that time would simply have created a scandal which in a few years would have been forgotten, for you were then a second son of an impoverished baron who was hiding his present poverty in his dilapidated chateau near Mazamet. You had as yet done nothing to bring you before the public, and your disgrace would pass unnoticed except for the few people who knew you at the time. I wanted something more than that, I wanted a punishment as great as the crime; therefore I waited. Fearing that if you knew I was alive you would be on the lookout for the vengeance which, in the first mad moment of despair, I had told you would follow you to the day of your death, I decided to become officially dead. Fate or Providence aided me in the terrible wreck of the vessel on which it was known I had taken passage. So many perished that it was easy to pass off as one of the dead. Thus did Andre de Narville die, and Count del Sarto was born."

Count del Sarto spoke with maddening slowness, enjoying De Beaufort's growing nervousness and tense anxiety, as these lengthy details showed him the more clearly how refined was the cruelty of the one who held him in his power. Monsieur de Beaufort dared not object, guessing well that each objection, each show of suffering or impatience would only serve to lengthen the agony the more. So, with tensely drawn muscles and fixedly set face, he listened while the other continued apparently unaware of what tortures he was inflicting:

"Before leaving France I had realized all of my fortune, sacrificing over half of it to get the ready cash. With this, I made another start. Luck and my desire to become rich, no matter how, favored me. I made money rapidly, knowing as I did that it takes money to be well avenged. I had settled in Milan, and from there, through the aid of private detectives, I watched the progress of your career. You became successful little by little; you achieved renown, and it was I, your sworn enemy, who aided you to that success."

"You?" the exclamation broke from Monsieur de Beaufort.

"Certainly I. Did I not tell you that to carry out my plans, you had to be known individually, not because of the past glory of the name you had inherited? Therefore every time you sought an appointment, every time you had a case to plead, it was my money which smoothed out the way, my influence which caused you to be favored, while others more worthy, perhaps, were disappointed."

Consternation and an almost superstitious dread could be read on Monsieur de Beaufort's face, as of a sudden his rapid rise to success flashed through his memory, and he understood what had puzzled him so long, how his slightest effort, his most insignificant act brought to him immediate reward or unmerited fame. And all this was that he would be made to suffer more. Suddenly he thought of his recent appointment as judge d'instruction which had come to him as a surprise. Was this also the work of enemy? This question his eyes asked, though through a powerful effort of his will, the lips remained silent. Count del Sarto answered it, an evil, triumphant smile on his lips:

"Yes, Monsieur de Beaufort, your recent appointment came to you through me."

Under the impulse of the sudden terror which surged over him, Monsieur de Beaufort asked:

"What was your object in doing this?"

"That you would be more willing to respond to the blackmailing demands I intend making upon you," was the hard, incisive answer which brought the pallor of fear to listener's cheeks as he cried in rebellion:

"And if I refuse to give in to those demands?"

"You will not dare refuse; the disgrace would be too great."

"There is always death as a last resort, and I am not a coward!"

"You will no more dare die than you will dare refuse to give in to my wishes, for the day you die all the papers of France will publish the vile story of your great sin, and the name you will have tried to save will be handed down blackened and forever disgraced to your son, who because of it will curse your memory."

Monsieur de Beaufort fell back in his chair crushed. The relentless face and hard, cruel voice told him that the threat just made was not a vain one, and would be carried out without mercy or hesitation. He felt that he was lost; and this fear froze his energies and numbed his brain, as he listened with increasing terror to Count del Sarto, who continued to give his explanations.

"While I was thus aiding your success, I was also laying the foundation for my coming revenge, such as I planned it there beside the lifeless body of the woman you had slain as surely as though you had dealt the fatal blow. With the giving of 20,000 lira to one of the lowest, most notorious women in Rome, a woman who had sunk to the very depths of vice and degradation, I induced her to live with me as my wife, then with the promise of 50,000 additional lira, I gained her consent to bear me a child. I did not care as to the sex then, since at that time your daughter was still living, and it did not matter much to me which of your two children would be called upon to pay for the sin of the father!"

That last remark the meaning of which he could not grasp, though he felt it contained a most terrible threat, caused Monsieur de Beaufort to ask in hoarse emotion:

"What do you mean by that? What

(Continued on page seventeen.)

A Triple Mystery

Or, Longman's Test Case

By Charles Morris Butler

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CHAPTER VI.

THE STAB IN THE DARK.

"I NOTICED a poster pasted up in the depot offering a reward for the return of a Mr. Smithson's wallet," said Mr. Longman, as he seated himself at the dining table. "What did this gentleman lose that he offers a hundred dollars reward for its return?"

"I think the purse contained about that sum, and in addition there was a paper of some importance of no value to anybody but Smithson. It appears Gregory—that's the young man's name—had an option on a certain piece of property for a certain sum. This property has doubled in value recently owing to the fact that coal has been found on the land. The owners, who are not residents of this town, are trying to repudiate the optional agreement. It means quite a loss to the young man."

"I see. And if the paper can be recovered it will be worth about $100 without the return of the money?"

"Why do you ask?" inquired Mr. Haynes.

"I have a reason, believe me," said Frank, who was rather downcast that he had not succeeded in getting a clew to the Haynes' robbery, and felt that the merchant sized him up as a failure.

The public in general expect too much of a police officer. The stories of Sherlock Holmes, Allan Pinkerton and Detective Burns are so surrounded with romance, that they expect a man, just because he wears a star, to be endowed with supernatural powers, to be able to ferret out crime by instinct, or smell, like a bloodhound. As a matter of fact, detectives are very mortal and succeed just for this reason—they can study human nature. In crime, they take note of the little things, piece together slender threads which are overlooked by those not constantly employed, and they discover the why of things.

"I have reason to believe that I know who stole the pocketbook. Even if this is true it will be a question if the money will be recovered. The recovery of the paper is problematical also. If I am correct in what I think happened, I'll find it; but it may have been burned up instead of torn up and thrown away."

"I trust you find it! The loss of Smithson's agreement means much to Helen. Candidly, she is to be married to Gregory. The loss of her $500—my dower to her—and the loss of what he expected to make on this deal, will postpone the marriage for years, or they will start life handicapped by poverty. The money Smithson deposited on this option was practically all he had."

"Where is Smithson now?"

"Owing to the loss, he was forced to return to Chicago to see if he could not close the deal at once, or get a new option."

"Explain how he came to lose the wallet."

"He is a little bit hazy on the subject. He is sure he had it after getting on the train. He remembers taking his return ticket out of the book. He carried it on the inside of his overcoat. He did not miss it until he had left the train. He cannot imagine that it was stolen, he thinks that it must have dropped out of the pocket when he picked up his coat. He had the coat on the back of his chair while he dozed, and in some manner it became turned collar-end down."

"Mr. Smithson did not mention the fact that he talked with a lady passenger on the train, did he?"

"No, he did not. There were several Lewistonians on the train, though, I believe. There usually is at this time in the month, especially a few who run down as far as Waukesha and Lake Bluff for a little recreation and lake breeze. Why the lady passenger? You don't mean to imply anything out of the way, do you?"

"Not in the least. I don't know anything about it, I am only surmising a case, and as I said before, I will have proofs soon."

Helen joined them at the table.

"You think you have a clew to the robber of Mr. Smithson's wallet?" she asked.

"More than a clew. I know. But it would be my word against the thief's. I have no tangible evidence, but expect to have it."

"No one in Lewiston, of course?"

"Yes and no. But let that rest for a while. Do you mind telling me how your son Henry came to be mixed up with that fellow Wharton and so lost his $500?"

"Henry—as perhaps you know—you seem to know quite considerable about this town for the time you have been in it—owns one of the two pool and billiard halls we have here. All the young bloods of this burg frequent his place. In connection with the hall, in the rear is also run a local political club and smokery. Members meet there and play cards and play at politics also. The young men usually play for cigars and cheap stakes. But you know how it is. Sometimes the rules are broken and they gamble for real money and sometimes for high stakes. I am sorry this is so, but there is no use trying to disguise the truth.

"On the night of the robbery of my store—the same night I gave Henry his $500—Wharton was in town giving an entertainment of sleight-of-hand, hypnotism, and so-called mind-reading; as, by the way, they are doing tonight. He had been in the billiard hall tacking up posters, and had played a game with one of the leading players. Something was said about a poker party coming off that night, and he asked for the privilege of joining the party.

"Knowing that he would have considerable money, his request was granted. To make a long story short, he cleaned out the whole bunch. Henry lost his $500—that's all there is to it."

"Was there any doubt expressed that Wharton did not play on the square?" asked Longman.

"Quite a doubt. But what could you do after the money was lost and paid over the table?"

"Grin and bear it," said Frank, shaking his head. "I know that Wharton cheats at cards, at least. You say the card game took place on the same night that your store was robbed?"

"The same evening."

"Have you any idea when the game broke up?"

"I think Henry said about train time, long about four o'clock."

"And Wharton went right over to his hotel at that time?"

"I suppose so. I don't know anything about that."

"Mr. Longman," said Helen, "do you suppose that Wharton had anything to do with this robbery?"

"I would not put it past him, but so far I have no proofs. The fact that he won $500 from Henry, or that Henry had this amount to lose, would naturally bring out in conversation the additional fact that your father had made a sale amounting to a thousand or so. News of this kind travels fast in a place of this kind, you know."

"Quite true," responded Mr. Haynes, "but the fact that Wharton is a gambler does not necessarily imply that he is a house-breaker also."

"No, indeed, said the detective, "but it gives you ground for suspicion. So far he is the only person towards whom suspicion would naturally point. Let us suppose a case. We will say the game broke up about four o'clock. What more natural than that Henry and his friends crossed over to the depot and stood on the platform talking over matters preparatory to going home? Bartholdi was at the station also as usual, say ten minutes before time. This would leave the business district unprotected or unthought of. The arrival and departure of the train would consume five minutes more. Bartholdi possibly helped the station agent drag the express and other mail and baggage into the station, or talked to the boys for a few moments. A half hour could easily elapse. For the sake of argument, we will say Wharton leaves the hall and goes right over to your store. The coast is clear. He boldly enters the front door by means of a master-key. He goes to the safe and easily succeeds in solving the combination. The train in the meantime comes and goes. He is in a hurry and simply grabs the one package of money at hand, and makes his escape. It is a very plausible conjecture."

"Plausible, yes. How are you going to prove it?" asked Mr. Haynes, showing more interest than usual.

"It might be that Bartholdi saw him leaving the doorway, or at least suspiciously near. Or the hotel clerk may recollect just when Wharton returned to the hotel. I have telegraphed to Chicago for a history of Wharton. If this man has a criminal past, he might be convicted by circumstantial evidence."

"Conviction without the recovery of the money would not help my case any," said the merchant.

"If he had any left it would be turned over to you."

"I hope you succeed, if it is only to punish him for cheating Henry," said Helen. She never thought of her own loss.

"You can safely leave his case in my hands," said Longman, "I have a personal matter to settle with him, which makes me doubly desirous of putting him behind the bars. Now, if you will excuse me, I will be on my way. Do not be surprised if you do not see me for a few days. I may have to run down to Vaughnton and Bordenville before this matter is finally settled."

"Who is paying the expense of this investigation?" asked Mr. Haynes. "I did not know that the city was interested in this matter."

"Sheriff Whitcomb, I believe. Anyway, you are not expected to contribute. I have Smithson's reward as good as in my pocket."

"I hope so, at least. For I can not afford to pile expense on top of my loss."

Frank left the merchant's home by the front stairway and wended his way toward the telegraph office. Tyler was at work dispatching some railroad orders when he arrived, and the detective busied himself looking at the railroad map hanging on the wall and studying the time table. The evening down train was about due and quite a few hangers-on were lounging about, and they seemed to be interested in Longman. He knew at least that he was being talked about. This was very natural; he was a stranger, and had been worsted in a legal battle; he was idling around, and was an object of curiosity because no one knew exactly his business.

The train arrived. A few people got off, and a few people left when the train departed. Then Tyler approached the detective and handed him a telegram. It was an answer to his telegram to Inspector Shea:

"R. W. reputation of being a fake hypnotist. Gambler. Arrested for forging check. Relatives made good. DeW. implicated in fleecing a rube at Sans Souci Park. Concession closed. Both unsavory reputation.

"JENKS."

"This tells me nothing new," returned the detective, "but I will keep it to show to the Judge if necessary to prove who I am. Did you start the search for the pocketbook as I suggested?"

"Sure, and I have had a message back that a torn wallet was found. There was a piece of paper inside in one of the compartments. A receipt for money paid by Smithson on a piece of property; but I have received no information about any other papers."

"You say the wallet is found? And a receipt in it?"

"True as you are standing here. You certainly made a pretty good guess about the wallet all right. I've ordered it sent through on the first train."

"When will that be?"

"Express goes through here on the fly at eight o'clock. If the man knows enough to put the package in with the railroad mail it may be thrown off here. If not, it will go down to Kaslovia and be returned here at one o'clock on the Chicago train."

"It will come in your name, I suppose. And will you be here to get it?" asked Frank.

"I'll make it my business," replied the operator. "I want to get my share of the reward as soon as possible."

"Get the wallet and hang on to it. Don't let it get out of your possession. Before it is turned over to Smithson I want to use it for evidence against the robber."

From the depot Frank went over to the hotel, got his key from the clerk and went up to his room. He felt a little bit sleepy and tired and wanted to rest until supper time.

The room he occupied was on the side fronting the railroad track, an east room, over the dining-room, with a window on the side overlooking the kitchen, which was only one story. There was a door between him and the next room, swinging into his room. He noticed that the key was in his side. A door at the end of the hall led out onto the roof, and a flight of stairs led from the roof to the ground into the back yard of the hotel.

Longman's brain was working, analyzing the events of the past twenty-four hours. He felt that in Wharton he had the robber of Haynes' store. All that it required was some small connecting link to weld the chain of circumstantial evidence around the gambler and thief. Perhaps he would find this link by interviewing the night clerk, or Bartholdi, or young Haynes. Perhaps he saw Wharton near the store, when he should have been in an opposite direction, in the hotel or near it. He was picturing in his mind, boylike (for he was little else—an amateur sleuth) the ovation he would get from his chief, and the chagrin of Lieutenant Jenks, when he dozed.

He didn't mean to sleep; but the night ride had deprived him of his rest the night before, and he dropped off into slumber almost instantly. He thought he had been asleep about ten minutes when he heard the supper bell ring. He was just tired enough not to want to eat. He rolled over on his side and dozed again. He thought he heard talking in another room. He thought of Wharton. A door was slammed, it jarred the key out of his door, and it fell with a light thud on the carpet. He was too sleepy to care.

He thought he could see the shadow of night creeping on. Darkness fell and he was at peace. But what he saw was not darkness. Through the keyhole from the next room was blown a soothing, pungent perfume. He inhaled the odor; it was very quieting and smelled like ether. The porter came upstairs and knocked at his door. No response. Tyler was looking for him. The porter reported that he was not in his room. Later a window was opened. From out of the darkness crept a form, masked. In his hand he held a gleaming stiletto.

It was Antonio, the revengeful Italian. The blow in the back was to be struck!

CHAPTER VII.

WHARTON ARRESTED.

THE Italian entered the room. By the light of the moon streaming through the window, Antonio saw the motionless form. Just as he was about to strike, the door opened from Wharton's room, and the evil face of the gambler showed itself.

Rena De Wolfe clung to his arm. She was pale and frightened.

"For God's sake, Ralph, stop that crazy Italian! Would you add murder to the crimes on your soul! If you do this deed, I swear I will turn State's evidence and inform on you!"

When the door opened the Italian paused, ready to make his escape. He seemed to be laboring under great excitement.

"Shut up, you damn fool," said Wharton, shaking the girl's hands from his arm, "do you want to rouse the house?"

"Yes!" she hissed, "I'll scream if you dare to go further with your fiendish deeds."

"You're a fool, Rena. This man is a detective. I know it! He'll have us behind the bars in no time, if he isn't put out of the way."

"I don't care if he does, I won't let you commit murder. Gag him, tie him up, and leave him here until we can get out of town, that's all I'll stand for. Do you hear me—that's all I'll stand for!" And she stamped her foot in rage.

Wharton made a few passes in front of Antonio. The man straightened up as if prodded with a pin. A tremor shot through his frame. He woke up as if from a deep sleep. He glanced at the stiletto in his hands and mechanically placed it in its sheath.

"Tie up the dog," Wharton commanded. "He's drugged insensible." Rena De Wolfe threw him a rope, taken from the top of her trunk. Mechanically the Italian took the same and bound the unconscious man securely, Wharton assisting him. Then a gag was placed in Longman's mouth.

Wharton then ordered Antonio from the room. The Italian quickly departed the same way he came. The gambler then closed the window and drew down the shades. Deliberately he rifled the detective's pockets, taking all the money he had. He ran his hand against Longman's star.

"You see, my lady, I was right. This man is a detective. He ought to be put out of the way. Why didn't you let me force the Italian to do it?"

"Why? Because I don't want to swing with you for murder. The Italian would peach on you."

"How in hell could he? He wouldn't know anything about it."

"Don't be too sure. He wasn't under your influence all the time. Besides, it would be easy to implicate you. You can do as you please, Ralph Wharton, but if you take my advice you will put back every thing you are copping; lock this door from the inside, and go out his door from the front, snapping it after you. I'll see that the coast is clear. You must remember that you can't get out of town until one o'clock, and you might get nabbed yet."

"Well, I'll take your advice, Rena. But if I had my way I'd put an end to him."

"Hurry up. Do as I tell you and get over to the show just as quick as you can. I'm going out the back way so that I can prove an alibi."

About two hours afterward, the effect of the drug began to wear off. Slowly consciousness returned to Longman. He tried to move his arms, but they were tied too tightly. The gag in his mouth almost choked him, he breathed with difficulty. For what seemed like hours to him he lay trying to gather his shattered wits together. Finally things became plain to him, and he realized his condition. He was bound in such a manner that he could not move. He tried to raise his foot to pound against the footboard, but to no avail.

Again the porter came to his door and knocked. He tried to make a noise, but his voice would not carry through the gag. The porter tried the door, it would not open. Then he went downstairs and secured a master-key and returned with it. He placed, or tried to place, the key in the lock and found that there was a key on the inside. He pounded again. No answer. Suspicious, he went down to the office and told Tyler of his fears. Tyler immediately hunted up Bartholdi.

Bartholdi had been a Pinkerton watchman in Chicago and was acquainted with the law and knew that he would be justified in breaking into the room.

The show was over by this time and Wharton and De Wolfe had returned to the hotel. They came in and very composedly set about to packing their trunks preparing to make their get-away on the Chicago train.

Nothing went to show that they were in a hurry or that they were worried in any manner. Even when Bartholdi, Tyler and the night clerk came into the hallway and tried Longman's door, they showed no interest in the matter. Wharton let Rena in the room and went downstairs to get the expressman to take the trunks to the depot. As he came out of the room the three investigators were outside of the hotel on the roof of the kitchen.

Bartholdi was trying to raise Longman's window, which he succeeded in doing, and clambered in. The watchman lit the gas and saw Longman lying on the bed, then opened the door for Tyler and the clerk. As they entered Frank's room Rena calmly took her departure.

It only took a second to cut the detective's bonds. The first thing he said was:

"Don't let Wharton get away! I know this is his work!" He fell back, gasping.

Bartholdi rubbed Frank's benumbed limbs, all the time suggesting silence. The clerk went out into the hallway, soon returning with a glass of water, which Frank drank eagerly. He recognized Tyler.

"Did you get the wallet?" he asked.

"Sure," and he handed the book to the detective. In it was Smithson's option on the property in dispute.

"I didn't want to have to arrest Wharton just yet," he said, smiling sickly at Bartholdi, "but he is a dangerous man to be allowed at liberty. This pickpocketing charge will keep him in limbo until I can get further evidence against him for other things."

"I think you had better do so," said Bartholdi. "It is evident that he is a desperate man. Next time it will be the knife for you. I wouldn't be surprised if he made an armed resistance anyway, when we arrest him tonight."

The four people went over to the depot together. Wharton and Rena De Wolfe were busy overseeing the piling of their trunks and show goods on trucks ready to be loaded on the train. Bartholdi drew his revolver and placed it in his coat pocket, keeping his hand on the butt, Tyler and the clerk stopped at the ticket office door, while Bartholdi and Longman approached Wharton.

"I want you!" said the officer. "You are under arrest."

Wharton was surprised to see Longman, but did not show undue agitation.

"What do you want me for?" he very calmly asked. Miss De Wolfe clung to his arm. "Do you think I am going to jump my bill?"

"You know why you are wanted, all right! Give me your hands!" And he drew his cuffs and prepared to manacle him.

"What means this outrage——"

"That will do, Wharton," replied Bartholdi, quietly, "you had best come quietly," and he snapped the bracelets on his wrists. Then he took charge of Wharton's revolver and knife.

"Do you want to hold the woman?" asked the officer.

"That depends on her," replied Longman, who was averse to arresting her, guilty or not. "If she wants to turn state's evidence she may stay at the hotel until morning."

"We have done nothing to be arrested for," she said in a tremulous voice.

"Here you, Tyler," cried the watchman, "run these trucks into the station. Hold the goods until after trial in the morning. I'll take Wharton over to the jail, Longman, and I think you had better bring the lady along, too. We will leave them together while I make the train and round of the square. By that time she may come to her senses."

The two were placed in jail together. The doors clanked behind them.

"See where your chicken-heartedness has landed us," said the man. "If you had let me slit his windpipe or Antonio carry him off, this wouldn't have happened."

"I don't know about that, Ralph. They undoubtedly had a suspicion of you before that, else how did they free Longman so soon? You can thank your lucky stars that it's no worse."

"I'll walk around with you," said Longman to Bartholdi. "What proceedings will the court take against Wharton?"

"He will be given a preliminary hearing. If he can't get bonds, he will be bound over to the Criminal Court; taken down to Bordenville for trial. The regular term of court won't take place for about thirty days."

As they passed Haynes' store Longman was reminded to ask:

"You remember the evening that Haynes' store was robbed that Wharton was in town?"

"Quite vividly. Why, you don't mean to imply that Wharton had anything to do with the robbery, do you?"

"It is more than probable," answered Longman. "But so far I have nothing to work on. Do you know from where Wharton came here? By way of Bordenville or Chicago?"

"I think he came from Vaughnton here."

"And from Bordenville to Vaughnton?"

"Undoubtedly."

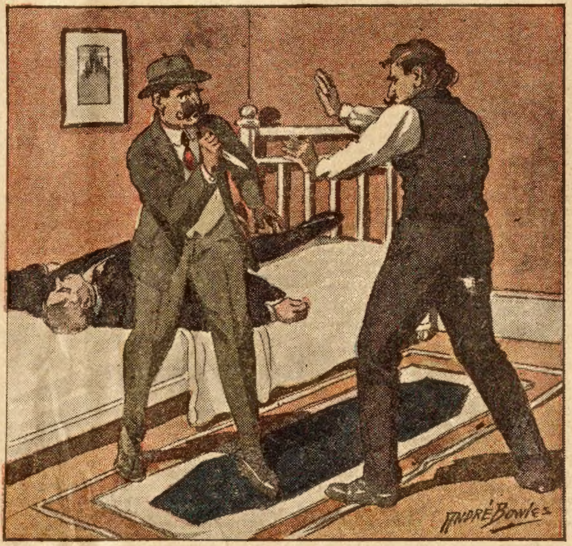
"Ah! You knew, of course, that several other robberies had taken place in these other towns?"

"Yes, Whitcomb told me about it. And you think that you can connect Wharton with this chain?"

"I hope to. Now, on the night that Haynes was robbed, Wharton and young Haynes and several others were playing cards. Do you remember seeing Wharton after the game broke up?"

"I think I did, by Jove!"

"Did he go direct to the hotel from the billiard hall?"



Wharton made a few passes.

"I passed him on one of my rounds. I talked to him a moment, I think, in front of the opera house. He explained to me that he was looking over the land to see how he could get his scenery out quickly."

"Didn't you think this kind of fishy in light of events which came after?"

"Why?"

"Didn't Wharton ship his stuff to Chicago?"

"Sure!'

"And the train did not leave until ten o'clock?"

"True, but I heard nothing of the robbery until I came on at night."

"At any rate we have pushed Mr. Wharton pretty close to the front of the stage?" said Longman.

"You have, indeed. A fine chain of circumstantial evidence. In light of his record, it ought to be sufficient to connect him."

"I think it will," replied Longman. "But it depends on what I succeed in finding out about Vaughnton and Bordenville."

"We might sweat him a little, and in that way get a little information as to the other robberies. Well, let's hurry over to the depot. The train is due."

After the train pulled out Bartholdi and Longman went over to the jail. Tyler went home highly pleased to feel that he had earned part of the hundred-dollar reward. The night clerk corroborated Bartholdi in agreeing that on the night Haynes' son played cards Wharton did not arrive at the hotel until after the train had left, and he felt sure that the man came from the neighborhood of the opera house, which was in the same block with Haynes' store. There could be very little doubt but what Wharton was the culprit. They did not enlighten him as to the Haynes' robbery, consequently he was none the wiser.

They found Miss De Wolfe crying, and Wharton pacing back and forth in his cell, angrily puffing a cigarette.

"Well, Miss De Wolfe," said Longman, "what is your conclusion in the matter? Are you ready to promise that you will turn state's evidence, or will we leave you here overnight?"

"What do you want me to confess? I have no idea why we are arrested."

"Primarily, I am arresting Wharton for robbing Smithson on the train last night."

"It's a lie," shouted Wharton.

"No, it is not!" replied Longman. "I saw Miss De Wolfe hand you the wallet, I saw you gut the contents and throw it from the train. I don't need her evidence, but am willing to give her a chance. But the robbery of Smithson is only a minor misdemeanor. But you can believe me when I say that I am also going to put you over the road for something bigger. You know what I mean?"

"No, I don't know what you mean, 'something bigger!' " said Wharton, genuinely surprised.

"Where did you go? What did you do, after you left young Haynes after robbing him of his wad in the poker game? You see, I know."

"I walked around the square."

"Sure you did. Also helped yourself to a bunch of dough which did not belong to you. House breaking! Safe cracking! You're in for a nice little ten-year shove over the road."

"What are you trying to do, scare me?" demanded Wharton.

"You are a good actor, all right, Wharton. But you showed extreme bravado to come back here after you had made a clean get-away."

Wharton took Miss De Wolfe over in one corner and conversed with her in an undertone. Then he came back to the detective.

"Does your offer still hold good to allow Miss De Wolfe her liberty if I confess to the Smithson robbery?"

"I've said that I would allow her to go to her room at the hotel overnight. What the Judge concludes to do in the morning I don't know. That's up to him."

"We will take a chance," replied Wharton. "Leave her with me for five minutes, I wish to talk to her about getting me counsel. Then let her go—I alone am guilty. I am a hypnotist and she is under my control."

"I am satisfied of that, too," replied Longman, "just as I am aware that you had Antonio under your control and egged him on to assault me on the train."

"You are a wise guy, Mr. Longman, shrewder than I gave you credit for. But you don't know it all, and I'll get the best of you yet!"

"Don't be too sure! I may know more than you think I do. I haven't been down to Vaughnton or Bordenville yet, and may have a few other crimes to lay at your door!"

"That remains to be seen," replied the hypnotist. But Longman saw him turn pale and tremble at the threat.

CHAPTER VII.

MSTERY NUMBER TWO.

IN THE morning Longman, Bartholdi and Smithson were on deck early. The wallet was easily identified as belonging to the real estate man. He was a very happy young man to get back his option and gladly gave the detective the $100 reward, as promised.

The Judge arrived from Chicago at four o'clock, but did not appear at court until eleven. He was more than surprised to have a case up for trial. Two arrests in two days was a record-breaker for him, enen during "wet" time. Longman felt like saying something sarcastic to the Justice, but refrained, though a sarcastic smile flitted across his face when court was opened.

Now that the Judge knew Longman—what he was—he blushed foolishly and was very solicitous to carry out the detective's wishes in the matter.

Early in the morning Miss De Wolfe had engaged the services of a lawyer to defend Wharton. To Smithson she had offered to return the stolen money, providing he agreed not to prosecute. Longman refused to allow this to be done. Cash bail was offered by Wharton, but Longman objected unless the bail was made $10,000 to guarantee the presence of Wharton at the opening term of the Criminal Court. Bail for $500 was accepted for the woman and Wharton was held to the Criminal Court, and later taken to Bordenville, where he was placed in the county jail.

It was Longman's idea that the charge of pickpocketing could be made to hold Wharton until he had time to investigate the robberies in Vaughnton and Bordenville. He felt that the villain could be convicted on circumstantial evidence, but was in hopes that he could get some direct evidence in the two towns later on. As far as Longman was concerned he felt that mystery Number One was a mystery no longer. He sent in a report of the circumstances to Inspector Shea, and wrote a letter home to Mildred assuring her of his safety and success in the matter.

He visited Haynes' store and cheered up that individual by intimating that he could possibly recover some of the money from Wharton when the right time came. Helen and Smithson were deeply grateful to him for what he had accomplished. Tyler divided his share of the reward with the person who had found the wallet and Longman donated $10 to Bartholdi as a mark of appreciation. He then bade farewell to Lewiston. It was not necessary to return.

Longman, to save time, went over to the livery stable to engage a horse and carriage to take him over to the livery stable to engage a horse and carriage to take him over to Vaughnton. He found all vehicles engaged, but was referred to Henry Haynes as to the possibility of that young man taking him over there in his electric runabout. Henry appeared to be pleased to do so and the two were soon on their way to Vaughnton.

"I understand that you are a detective," said Henry, as he guided his machine on the way. "I presume you are working on the robbery which took place at my father's place of business recently?"

"Yes," admitted Frank.

"Any clew to the robber?" the young man asked.

"Circumstantial—nothing definite or direct."

"Do you suppose that Wharton had anything to do with it?"

"He is the only person suspicion points to at this time. It is reasonable to suppose that he is the man. We know that he cheats at cards; we know that he robbed Smithson on the train; we also know that he was in Lewiston at the time. By the way, after the poker game broke up, in what direction did Wharton go?"

"I am sure I saw him standing in front of my father's store. Or, to be more explicit, I saw him passing the store. I thought he had been down to the opera house."

"That's about all the evidence I have," replied Longman, "but I think it is sufficient to hold him. If I can connect him in some way with the robbery that took place in Vaughnton, it will be proof positive."

"Well, I hope you do. For to tell the truth, this robbery has created strained relations to a certain extent between my father and myself."

"You mean on account of your losing your $500 to Wharton?"

"Partially," responded the young man evasively.

"I don't quite understand what you mean," said Longman. "I presume some family matter of some kind, which you do not care to discuss."

"I am sorry I intimated anything," said young Haynes, "but since I have, I might as well explain. My father quizzes me rather sharply as to whether I, myself, had been in the store on the night of the robbery. He hurt my pride considerably."

"I see, you have the combination of the safe, also?"

"Yes, and that's what father intimated. It made me warm around the collar, and I threw a shot into him about young Smithson. Gregory also knows the combination. Uses the old man's safe for storing leases and valuable papers. The family is dead stuck on the young chap because he is going to marry Helen."

"Your father never intimated to me that you had the combination," replied Longman. "In fact, he disputed the imputation made by myself."

"Dear old Dad! How I have wronged him!"

"And your sister had nothing but kind wishes for you. I believe she feels sadder for your loss to Wharton than she does for her own loss."

"I know it!" exclaimed the young man, "and I only hope to God that you succeed in clearing up the mystery. It must not be by circumstantial evidence, either."

"I hope so, too," responded Longman. "My professional reputation is at stake, or I'll be back in the newspaper business again writing against space, which is hard to do in the face of trust news associations."

Vaughnton was soon reached, and the car drew up before the general store of Miller Brothers. Young Haynes had a speaking acquaintance with Adolph Miller, one of the proprietors of the store, and introduced Longman to him. Then Henry returned to Lewiston. After a little preliminary talk, Adolph took

Longman back into the office department.

The detective rapidly took survey of the place. Miller Brothers' store consisted of a double building, with two entrances. One doorway led directly into the dry goods and shoe department; the other door led into the grocery store and postoffice department. The postoffice department was inclosed, forming a room about 12 by 50 feet, running from the front to a rear wall of the store, on the wall side of the building. A large arched doorway connected the three business departments, and a door led into the postoffice section and office.

In the rear of the postoffice section Miller Brothers had an office, partitioned off, where the brothers had a bookkeeper and the safe. The safe was within a fireproof vault built in the end of the building, like an old-fashioned fireplace. A window in the rear was ironed with bars, the ends of which were built into the masonry.

Miller dismissed the bookkeeper politely, and when the two were alone said:

"This robbery worries me, not so much on account of the loss sustained, as on account of its mysteriousness. There is absolutely no clew to how the money was taken. On the night of the robbery, which happened on the 17th of June, Herman, who usually tends to the matter, was out of town on business. Consequently I took charge of the books and cash, and locked the safe. I know I locked it, just as I know I locked and tried every door in the two stores to see that everything was O. K. for the night. When I came in the morning I found the safe locked as usual, but the cash was missing. That's all I know about it."

"Have you no theory to advance?" asked Longman.

"Two. One, the plausible one, that some expert housebreaker entered the store, found the safe, opened it by manipulating the combination and stole the money," answered Mr. Miller. "And one, the fact that we may have been robbed by a trusted employe."

"Now, you will pardon me, Mr. Miller, if I ask you a few questions which may seem impertinent. They may or may not have a bearing on this matter. It is a detective's business to be suspicious of every one. Unlike a judge, every one is possibly guilty, until proven innocent. I have just come from investigating a case which in a sense is very similar to this one. I was given to understand by the proprietor that only two persons were in possession of the combination of his safe. Innocently, I later discovered that four people at least had access to it. I know that it is not your desire to fasten a crime upon an innocent party, nor is it my desire either. I am solely actuated by your interest in the matter. If it should turn out that the perpetrators of this theft are persons whom you desire to protect, or at least not prosecute, that is up to you. I trust that I have made myself plain?"

"Perfectly. Personally I have nothing to withhold. First, of course, you wish to know who has the combination of the safe?"

"Sure."

"Three people. My brother Herman; my head clerk and assistant postmaster, George Barstow, and myself. In this regard, let me add a little matter. Herman is the authorized postmaster. As the vault itself is fireproof and ordinarily considered burglar-proof, we keep all stamps, stamped envelopes, money-order blanks, etc., on shelves in the vault. Government money is kept in a portable cashbox in the safe, which is in the vault. And all moneys of the firm are kept in a second cash-drawer within the safe. When closing time comes any one can close the safe, and vault, but no one but us three can open either.

"And on the night of the robbery?"

"Herman was in St. Louis. I received the firm's money from my clerk, Palatyn, counted it, and placed it in the safe. Barstow brought in his stamps, as usual, and put his money in the safe. He locked the safe in my presence, and I swung the vault door and locked it myself. I know the money was in the safe when I left it."

"So far, so good," said Longman. "You saw the money in the safe. And——"

"In the morning I opened the vault and safe and found the money gone! I don't mean that," added Adolph, quickly. "I mean that I found all of the bills gone from our cash drawer. No coins were taken, nor were any stamps stolen or any government money. According to Barstow, his accounts balanced and every cent was intact. There was more postoffice money on hand than private. That's what looks suspicious to me. Why wasn't all the money taken?"

"That's what I can't understand," said Longman. "It looks to me like a case of amateur burglary. The robber most likely was one perfectly acquainted with your affairs and didn't want to mix himself up with Uncle Sam."

"And in that case, could only be Herman, Barstow or myself? And Herman being out of town, the case would naturally narrow down to Barstow and myself?" There was deep concern in Adolph's voice.

"Not necessarily. My dear Miller," responded the detective, "the mere fact that you did not know just where Herman was would not prove conclusively that he was not in Vaughnton. Because he started for St. Louis is no sign that he went there."

"Sure, sure! I understand your reference. But dismiss that from your mind. Neither Herman nor I have any need to take money stealthily. Both of us are well within our allowance account and both of us have a private banking account. There wasn't enough taken to worry about. To me it is a betrayal of trust!" Adolph bit savagely at the end of a cigar he had just placed in his mouth.

"Am I to be given to understand that you suspect George Barstow?" asked the detective, surprised.

"Who else is there to suspect?" asked Mr. Miller, irritably.

While the two conversed, darkness had entered the store. Lights had been lit in all parts except the office. While seated, Mr. Miller's back was turned toward the frosted-glass partition which separated the office from the postoffice. Longman had been facing the doorway. He was conscious that some one was eavesdropping, and when the lights were turned on a shadow was plainly seen on the glass.

"People who know me best," replied the detective, "claim I like to argue—that I seldom agree with people, just for the pleasure I get out of disagreeing with them. Now whether this is true or not, I want to disagree with you. Because it is so apparent that Barstow is guilty—to you—is a reason why I don't want it to be true."

"Don't want it to be true? Why?" echoed Mr. Miller, incredulously. "Why?"

"Judgment is usually warped and prejudiced by our desires——'

"What do you mean?" demanded the storekeeper, springing to his feet. "What do you mean about my desires in this matter?"

Longman laughed heartily. "Pardon me, my dear Miller, but you misunderstood me. I didn't know there was any feeling between you and Barstow—and I don't now—only from your actions. What I meant to imply was that, whether Barstow is guilty or not, I would rather prove some one else guilty. Catch my drift now? My judgment, not yours, in this case is based on hope. I am prejudiced against a certain party I know, and want to connect him with the crime if I can, justly."

"Huh?" said Miller, seating himself rather reluctantly. "You have a clew?"

"Not exactly; still, possibly. Now, before we go any further, let me ask, how many persons know of your loss?"

"I wrote to Herman about it. I've had it up with Barstow, and, through him, the Postoffice Department. They refuse to investigate inasmuch as no postoffice money was taken. Of course I had this up with the sheriff, Whitcomb, and he knows my reason for desiring to have this matter cleared up quietly."

"I don't want to antagonize you in any way, Mr. Miller, but since Barstow knows about the robbery, have you any objections to my calling him in consultation?"

"I don't see how that will do any good," replied Adolph, "he would hardly confess to you."

"That isn't the question at issue this time," replied Frank quietly. He rose from his chair and quickly opened the door leading into the postoffice. The figure back of Mr. Miller's chair moved or attempted to move away from the glass partition, but was caught eavesdropping. "Step right into the office, Mr. Barstow, please!" said the detective in a positive tone.

Miller sprang to his feet and faced the entrance. "So you also add eavesdropping to your other traits of character?" he sneered as the figure of a young man came rather hangdoggedly into the office. He was a tall, sparely-built individual. Dressed neatly, but not expensively. His dark eyes sparkled with excitement.

"You will pardon me, Mr. Miller," spoke up the young man in a trembling voice, "but eavesdropping is no worse than backbiting! I have a right to know what you are talking about, when you use my name so that it can be heard all over the store. Another thing you overlook, too, is that I am a government employe, and have my reputation to protect."

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Longman, quietly, "may I offer my services as mediator, at least for a few moments?"

Both bowed.

"I was going to continue the conversation a little further. After all, wouldn't it be better to wait until after business hours? Suppose I go over to the hotel for supper, and meet you both here after closing time?"

"It is agreeable to me," said the young man. "And if some means may be provided that we can get together without fighting like cats and dogs and talk like sensible business men, some good may come out of it."

"That's up to you," replied Miller.

"It isn't up to me," said the young man, vehemently. "You know you have insinuated that I am a thief. I am no more a thief than you are. I think just as much of my reputation as you do of yours. If you have a right to throw slurs at me, I have a right to throw slurs at you! I am willing to resign my position with the government, but I am not willing to quit under fire."

"What do you want me to do, apologize?" sneered Miller.

"I want you to admit, at least, you have no grounds, just or otherwise, for accusing me. No one saw me enter the place after I left it at supper time, because I did not do so. I know that you did, and while that does not go to prove anything, as you have the right to come and go when you please, the evidence is in my favor that you were the last man in the place—or rather you were here after I left!"

"You lie, and you know you lie, Barstow!" exclaimed Miller.

"I don't lie, and you know I don't, Miller!" asserted the young man, who appeared the calmer. "I can prove my assertion correct, while you can prove nothing against me!"

"You are a pretty shrewd young man, all right, Mr. Barstow. But I'll get you yet. I'll send you up higher than a kite, if it costs me every cent I possess!"

"This gets nowhere," replied Longman, courteously. "I'll call again after supper, that is if you want me to."

"Wait a minute, Longman, don't hurry away," said Miller. "I'll walk over to the hotel with you. If we can have a meal served in your room I'd like to talk to you privately. I want you to understand just the reason why I suspect Barstow."

"And after you have heard Mr. Miller's story I will expect you to hear mine," replied the postal clerk. "I've got just as much right to be heard as he has—and I think a blamed sight more!"

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* * *

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"Who killed that man?"

"We three," answered the first German.

"What did you do it for?" the officer inquired of the second German.

"For fifty cents," was the answer.

"Don't you know you will be hanged for that?" was asked of the third, and he answered:

"The sooner the better."

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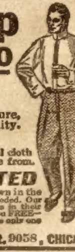

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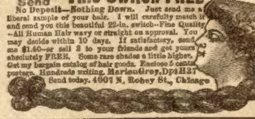

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Red Dick O'Laughlin

Or, THE CHIHUAHUA TRAIL

By Stephen Gaillard, Author of "Frontivard, the Terrible"

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CHAPTER XXII.

PURSUIT.

AS THE silver moon sank behind the Sierra and the light in the east brightened to the dawn, the squadrons of Bandera and Fierro, picturesque in nondescript uniforms, of which the high peaked sombreros were perhaps the most distinctive feature, swept across the plain at a steady trot. Swarthy, fierce-looking men they were; and as the level rays of the moon flung their grotesque shadows far across the desert, it might have seemed that a legion of demons bore them company. A hundred yards in front rode their leaders, scanning with eager eyes the shadow-haunted distances.

"Fierro," said Bandera, breaking a long silence, "can you see no sign of them?"

"No; nor do I expect to. Barring accident they would have reached the foothills ere this, and it is there that we have our one chance of overtaking them."

"But, good God! the General may be dead; those men know neither fear nor mercy."

"My one hope is that they will spare him as a hostage."

"It will ruin him with the army."

"Eh? Yes, my friend, not to mention ourselves. Do you realize that, with Villa dead, or his prestige with the army broken, Natera and Carranza will hardly reward us for this night's work?"

"But if we rescue the General, and the affair can be kept quiet——"

"Ah, in that case the chance will have been well worth the taking."

"Ha! senors, what is that I see yonder?" cried Salvator suddenly, who had been scanning the horizon while the others talked, "Is it not an automobile?"

The moon had disappeared behind the Sierra, but in its wake the soft gray light of dawn had overspread the plain; and far in the northern distance a dark, moving speck appeared in a cloud of dust. Close under the mesa which towered to the northward it seemed at first; then it grew larger, it took form; and across the plain the gray roadster came careering—sixty miles an hour. But one man was in it—the driver; and as he saw the body of horses in front of him he slackened speed. Bandera, Fierro and Salvator galloped forward to meet him. Pancho Villa brought the car to a full stop as they drew near, and stepping to the ground, received their salutes as they leaped from their horses.

Bending upon them a glance that seemed to search their souls, "How come you here?" he said curtly.

"My General," said Bandera, stepping forward, "last evening returning with Lieutenant Salvator to his quarters, after surrendering the command of my regiment according to your orders, I recognized in the streets the Gringo desperado, Red Dick O'Laughlin. Risking your displeasure, the Lieutenant and I followed him to the house of one Valdez Tierney, a malignant Cientifico who has fled the city. With the aid of the caretaker, Pedro Badajoz, we captured him and lodged him, bound hand and foot, in the Casa Oquendo. Returning to the palace we learned that you had gone out—probably to the Casa Oquendo. We returned there, hoping to meet you and inform you of the capture we had made. What was our astonishment to learn that you had but just left in an automobile in company with this same O'Laughlin and the Gringo Trevelyan, and that you had taken the road out of the city. My General, we were alarmed. We resolved to follow you, even though you should have us shot the next morning. In the streets we met Major Fierro. He shared our opinion, and our resolve. We told Major Tello that I was restored to my command. With my regiment and Major Fierro's squadron we set out. We are here. If we have done wrong, my General, you can order us to be shot."

"On the contrary you have done well. What do the men yonder know of this affair?"

"Nothing, my General."

"And General Natera?"

"Nothing."

"Good, good! you are both discreet and brave, my officers. How did you do it? But never mind that now, you can tell me the whole story when time is less pressing. Colonel Bandera, that Red Dick O'Laughlin is a demon, a devil, and I, who have had many narrow escapes, have had the narrowest of my life."

The three officers stepped forward, curiosity plainly written on their faces.

"But I will tell you that story also when time is less pressing," said Villa, smiling grimly. "Just now, can you give me writing materials, a horse, and a man who can run an automobile?"

"The first two, yes, my General," said Fierro, "but I fear not the last."

"Oh, very well, we can take the machine with us until we can find a place to hide it among the hills. Here, Salvator, write what I dictate."

The Lieutenant, who had produced the writing materials, rested the paper on his saddle and waited.

"General Natera," began Villa, "I have suddenly determined to move in force upon Ojinaga, against Mercado and Orozco. I am accompanying the advance, consisting of Colonel Bandera's regiment and Major Fierro's squadron. Have General Gonzales follow me, moving forward with all speed to Ojinaga. Let the fourth and fifth brigades follow his as quickly as they can be brought up from their camp south of the city. I shall pause on my route to attend personally to the annihilation of Catamount Palmer's band. The insolence of these Gringo desperadoes exceeds all bounds."

"Colonel," he said, folding the order and handing it to Bandera, "you will have one of your officers ride with all speed to General Natera and deliver this to him. On the way he will intercept General Gonzales and inform him of the change in my plans. And now to horse, senors, we have hard riding and a bloody fight ahead of us. These Gringos have won the first two hands in the game—your defeat, Bandera, and my capture—and in justice to them be it said that they played them with desperate skill; but, por Dios! I mean to win the last; and the prize, the lovely Virginia Trevelyan, shall belong to the bravest cavalier."

When, a few moments later, the rebel horse, three hundred strong, moved on at a swifter trot than before, Pancho Villa rode at their head on Fierro's black stallion, the Major having taken another mount from one of his troopers.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CHIHUAHUA TRAIL.

IT WAS late afternoon as Catamount Palmer's men climbed wearily up a mountain pass far to the north of Chihuahua. A day and night had come and gone since Villa's escape, and during all that time the pursuit had been untiring, relentless. They had camped the night before in the secluded vale which the men called Spring Valley, only to mount and ride on again before dawn; only to see the vanguard of pursuit enter the valley even as they topped the pass leading out of it; and now, looking down, they could see the pursuers, like bloodhounds upon their track, galloping steadily on through the valley they had just left.

Reaching the top of the pass Palmer ordered a halt and called the leaders of the band, together with Red Dick and Trevelyan, about him. "We have got to make a stand soon," he said, "there is no other way; and the question is, where shall we make it? This place would be good enough were it not for the fact that if they know the mountain trails—and I fear they do—they can get in our rear and cut off all chance of further retreat, in short, surround us. Below us, to the north, is the valley in which we cut Bandera's regiment to pieces, and beyond that is a defile, steep and narrow, and beyond that still, the deserted town of Santiago de los Caballeros. What are your opinions gentlemen? Shall we attetempt to reach the town, or shall we wait for them here?"

"Won't we stand as much chance of being surrounded in the town as we do here?" said Trevelyan.

"More," said Hulburt laconically.

"It is about a toss up," said Beddoe, "though for myself I prefer the open."

"Me for the open, too, and the blue sky over me when I fight," said Tilford.

"Boys," said Red Dick, "I'd agree with you hearty if I didn't know something of this town of Santiago de los Caballeros, but there is an old monastery there—the monastery of San Pablo—that's as strong as any fortress against any thing but artillery. If we can reach it we can stand off a thousand greasers. Besides I have a friend inside who can show us a way out when cutthroat Villa thinks he has us sewed up tight."

'By Jove! I had not thought of that," said Palmer. "The old priest and the underground passage. There is no question, gentlemen, but that it is our only chance if we can but reach the town before they overtake us. Boys," he said turning to his men, "our friend O'Laughlin here has told us of a plan by which, if you can hold your nags to the work for two hours longer, we can give our greaser friends the slip and a fight for their trouble. Forward!"

His answer was a hearty cheer as the men urged their weary horses onward. Even as the last man cleared the top of the pass the pursuers appeared at the bottom of it.

Down into the valley, that had for many been a valley of death they rode, as the oblique rays of the sinking sun cast the shadow of the western ridge half across it. Clouds of vultures rose on either hand as they galloped on, and Virginia, riding between Red Dick and her father, shuddered at their grisly significance. "I never dreamed," she said, "that war could be so horrible."

Red Dick reached out a brawny hand and, as if it had been the most natural thing in the world, the girl reached out her own to meet it. If on that night of his escape in Santiago de los Caballeros, the red bronze giant had seemed a paladin to her, he had in one short week grown into a demigod. Nancy, riding a little way behind, observed, and wondered—and approved. Her opinion of the "bandit" had also undergone a change, though not a greater one than she had undergone herself. It seemed an age since she had whimpered or complained, and the eclipse which she, the petted lady's-maid, had suffered in the last few stirring days had left her with no heartburning. Which shows that when it came to the acid test, Nancy's character assayed a high percentage of pure gold.

"War, little girl," said Red Dick, "is what men make it. Hell at the best, and at the worst—well, I think we can give the devil cards and spades and beat him at his own game."

The girl turned in her saddle and looked back. Down from the pass behind them, into the shadowy valley, the pursuers came galloping on. The hand Red Dick held trembled in his own. "Who," she asked, "is that man on the big black horse riding in front?"

"That is Pancho Villa, little girl," said Red Dick, "the best general and bloodiest cutthroat in Mexico."

"And that man close beside him is Bandera?"

"Yes."

For some moments the girl was silent, then she spoke to the two men riding beside her.

"Listen," she said, "you, my father, and you, Dick O'Laughlin, give me your words of honor that you will save your last cartridges for me if we are overtaken."

And the two men answered fervently: "Amen!"

As the band reached the bottom of the defile leading to the town the pursuers were less than half a mile behind, and down the valley came a fierce hallo, and rifles cracked, and bullets began to sing about their ears.

"On, on, on!" shouted Catamount Palmer, "don't stop to return their fire. You ride first with the women, Red Dick O'Laughlin, to show the way to the monastery. You, too, Trevelyan. Too much hangs upon your life to risk it unnecessarily. You, Beddoe, Hurlbut, Tilford, Preston, Ogilvie, McTavish—back here with me we'll give them a taste of the Mausers in the defile if they press us too hard!"

As Red Dick and Trevelyan were about to ride forward, they raised their rifles simultaneously, as if moved by a

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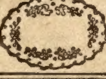

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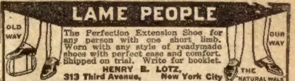

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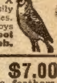

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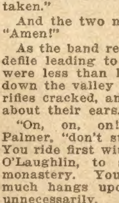

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common impulse, and fired. Pancho Villa's horse reared and plunged and nearly threw him, Bandera's staggered and fell.

"Too far away," said Catamount Palmer looking back, "you'll have a better chance at close range presently."

Up through the narrow defile sped the flight and pursuit, the latter coming ever nearer. Out over a narrow strip of open ground, on into the shadows of the deserted town. The sun had set and the moon had not yet risen, and the darkness favored the fugitives. Reaching the plaza, Red Dick turned to the left, and plunged into a maze of lanes. Avoiding the one leading to the cul-de-sac in which he had been nearly trapped, he led the band around to the western side of the monastery. A gate leading into a courtyard had been broken down. He dashed through, Virginia and her father at his side. Behind them came the band, galloping hard with the last breath in their horses. Beyond the courtyard was another gate leading into the interior of the monastery.

"Ride in there," he said to Virginia and her father, "while I go back and show the others the way."

The Catamount's band had not entered the courtyard a moment too soon. Behind them in the narrow street rang out a wild halloo, and a scattering volley sent a hail of bullets pattering against the walls of the monastery.

"Quick, quick!" shouted O'Laughlin, "through that other gate yonder! Ah, here they come!"

At the moment a dozen horsemen appeared at the gate of the courtyard. But their own eagerness defeated them. Striving to crowd through the broken gate all at once, they were thrown into confusion, and a well directed volley from Palmer and the rear guard drove them back. Before they could rally the last of the fugitives were through the second gate which was immediately closed and barred against them.

"By thunder! that was a close call," said Red Dick, wiping the perspiration from his face. "Where are Virginia and her father?"

As if in answer to his inquiry a shot followed by a shriek rang out from the direction of the inner courtyard.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FIGHT IN THE MONASTERY.

THE shriek was followed by a shout of triumph and a dozen shots fired in quick succession.

"Good God!" exclaimed Red Dick, "they've got Virginia!"

"But how did they get in?" said Palmer, who had that moment reached his side.

"Through the rear gate. They must have found it open. But quick, man, there is not a moment to lose. You guard the gate on this side; post your men at the windows—they're barred—and sweep the courtyard with your fire; while I take twenty men and charge the devils that have gotten in our rear."

Desperate as was the danger, the red bronze giant was icy cool. He could scarcely distinguish the forms of the men in the darkness of the passage leading from the gate they had just entered to the inner courtyard, but shouting to twenty of them by name, with the precision of a sergeant calling roll and calling upon them to follow him, he dashed down a passage way towards the interior of the monastery.

Meanwhile, from the inner courtyard came a mad confusion of sounds—yells, curses, rifle shots—in the midst of which O'Laughlin's ear could distinguish, mingling with the sharp crackling of the Mausers, the deeper note of a Colt revolver, while a stern, deep voice dominated the confusion.

"Ha! another!—come on, you hounds! —Another!—Never fear, little girl, your daddy can stand them off until our friends come to the rescue—Ha! another —and here is Red Dick O'Laughlin!"

As he dashed from the blackness of the covered way into the comparative brightness of the courtyard, Red Dick was greeted by a volley, and a hail of bullets sang about his ears. But the Celt seemed invulnerable. Twice his revolver spoke in answer to the volley and at each shot a saddle was emptied. The deadliness of his aim gave him a moment's respite, and looking about him he saw, near the opening of the archway, Billy Trevelyan, with Virginia at his side, crouching in the cover of a pillar of the arcade, while upon the ground in front of him sprawled four dark forms that would never rise again.

In the courtyard were perhaps forty Mexicans who had just been repulsed in an attempt to rush their solitary adversary, thanks to Red Dick's sudden appearance, and who, falling back to the opposite side began to leap from their horses and seek cover behind the pillars of the arcade. Even as they did so, out from the covered way dashed the twenty who had followed Red Dick.

"Off of your horses, boys!" he shouted, "and charge those rats behind the pillars yonder!" and setting the example he leaped from the sorrel and dashed forward.

From the opposite side came the voice of Quintin Bandera: "Steady my braves, we are two to one, and help is coming from outside! Shoot down that big bull in front, it is Red Dick O'Laughlin!"

The fight that ensued was brief, close and sanguinary. Charging across the courtyard Red Dick's men drove the Mexican's from the cover of the arcade in spite of their superior numbers—drove them back towards the passage leading to the gate by which they had entered, leaving the ground over which they fought strewn with dead and dying. In vain Bandera strove to check the fury of the Americans' onset; in vain he emptied his revolver at Red Dick, animated by deadly hate and hoping that the fall of their leader might daunt the courage of his men. At the entrance of the covered way the Mexicans rallied, and for a few moments fought desperately; but across the courtyard came another band to join their adversaries, led by Billy Trevelyan, and Bandera's men broke and fled towards the gate carrying him along with them, blaspheming, and cursing them for their cowardice. Many fell in the covered way; many fell at the gate and in the cul-de sac outside as the Americans poured volley after volley into them; and the remnant, still bearing their raging leader with them, retreated up the narrow lane leading from the cul-de-sac, only to meet reinforcements coming to their aid—a little too late.

In the inner courtyard Red Dick and Catamount Palmer, with Beddoe, Tilford, Hurlbut and Trevelyan, met and took stock of their losses. Five men had been killed, a dozen wounded; on the other hand, the Mexicans' losses had been more than twice as great, and the Americans had captured nearly forty horses. On his side, Palmer had repulsed a fierce attack, but with no loss at all, while the Mexicans had suffered even more heavily than in the courtyard.

"I think we have sickened them," said Palmer, "I don't believe even Villa can bring them to attack again."

"You don't know Villa," said Red Dick, "he's a bulldog, and he can make these greasers fight as no other man can; he'll have us out of here if he loses every man."

"Well, if he waits until morning and we can find your underground passage, he won't find us here. By the way, where's your priest?"

"Faith," said Red Dick, "I haven't had time to think of him, but he must be hiding osmewhere, we made noise enough fighting to wake any but the dead."

"Then let's find him and see about getting out of here, those greasers are likely to be reinforced tomorrow."

"Come on then," said Red Dick, "there are some rooms that look out upon that garden from which the underground passage opens, and I think we are most likely to find him there."

"While you fellows are hunting up the priest," said Trevelyan, "I think I'll look after the wounded, with Virginia and Nancy to help me. Perhaps you may not know that, when I was a young man, I graduated in medicine, and I think I can remember enough of the sawbone's trade to help the poor fellows a little."

"Me, too," said little Tilford. "I was an army hospital steward once. I'll help you."

The party separated, Trevelyan and Tilford going about their errand of mercy, Red Dick and Palmer proceeding towards the garden, while Beddoe and Hurlbut went to prosecute the search for the priest in other parts of the building.

"Dick," said Palmer, as the pair traversed the courtyard towards the garden, "if we should not find the priest, do you know the secret of this underground passage?"

"If you mean how to get into it, why, no, I don't," said Red Dick, "though the priest merely pushed against the stone and it swung open; he was not a strong man and it looked as though a child might have opened it."

"No doubt, if the child knew how, as the priest did; but can we?"

"We'd better find the priest," said Red Dick.

Even as they were speaking they had traversed the passage leading from the courtyard, and entered the garden. Even as they did so there was a flapping of wings and a dark and ominous form soared above them like the shadow of death.

The moon had risen and its oblique rays lighted up a corner of the garden. Looking that way Palmer exclaimed: "Good God! I think we have found him!"

He was right. There in the moonlit corner lay the priest, a bullet through his brain. He had been dead for days.

Red Dick shuddered and turned faint as he knelt beside the corpse, searching eagerly in the folds of the threadbare cassock; when he arose unsteadily to his feet a bunch of keys was in his hand.

"The key to the outer gate is among them," he said, handing them to Palmer.

"Yes, but, useless until we know the secret of the entrance."

O'Laughlin looked carefully about him. "It is here," he said, crossing the garden, "this big stone."

He threw his weight against the stone he had pointed out. It was as unyielding as the wall of which it formed a part.

"Good God!" said Catamount Palmer at his elbow, "are you sure man, are you sure?"

"Yes, yes! I noted the side it was on that night—to the right as you enter the garden, the second of two big stones—the biggest in the wall."

"You may be mistaken, try the other one."

The second stone proved as solid as the first.

"Trapped!" said Palmer, we'll have to fight it out."

O'Laughlin turned towards him, his face pale in the moonlight. "I wouldn't care," he said, "if it were not for Virginia."

The conclusion of this thrilling story will be found in the Ledger issue of next week. If you are not a regular subscriber to the Ledger we would like to have your name on our list. The Ledger is only $1.00 per year and we have stories awaiting publication that you cannot afford to miss.

A HAPPY BALD HEADED MAN

Well-Known Politician Nearly Bald Now Has New Growth of Hair.

Tells How He Did It.

A western politician, well known on account of his baldness and ready wit, surprised his friends by appearing with a new growth of hair. Many of his old friends did not know him and others thought he had a wig. On being asked how he did it, he made the following statement: "I attribute the remarkable growth of my hair to the use of the following simple recipe which any lady or gentleman can mix at home: To a half pint of water add 1 oz. of bay rum, a small box of Barbo Compound and ¼ oz. of glycerine. Apply to the scalp two or three times a week with the finger tips. It not only promotes the growth of the hair but removes dandruff, scalp humors and prevents the hair from falling out. It darkens streaked, faded, gray hair and makes the hair soft and glossy. These ingredients can be purchased at any drug store at very little cost and mixed at home."

* * *

Keeping It Quiet.

There is a certain middle-aged bachelor in this town who makes it a practice never to give a tip at a restaurant or cafe. And he boasts that the waiters think as well of him, and that he never leaves a table without receiving every attention, obsequious bows and a "Thank you, sir" from the waiter who has served him.

One who doubted this recently did a little gum shoe act after this tipless customer last week, to see if he was telling the truth. And sure enough, when the luncheon was finished and the exact amount of the check paid, all the polite things happened.

Then the amateur detective approached the waiter.

"That man gave you no tip," he said.

"No, sir," said the waiter.

"And yet you said, 'Thank you, sir,' in a loud tone."

"Yes, sir. Do you think I want other customers to know that some people don't tip?"

* * *

John the Methodist.

An old negro, near Victoria, Texas, who was the only Baptist in the neighborhood, always "stuck up for his own faith," and was ready with a reason for it, although he was unable to read a word. This was the way he "put 'em down:"

"Yo' kin read, now, kain't yo'?"

"Yes."

"Well, I s'pose yo' read de Bible, haint yo'?"

"Yes."

"Yo' read 'bout John de Baptis', haint yo'?"

"Yes."

"Well, yo' never read 'bout John de Mefodis', did yo'?"

* * *

Wasn't Foreman.

The new foreman was a hustler. Nothing escaped his eagle eye, and whenever he saw a workman suffering from a tired feeling he quickly woke him up.

So when he discovered a bricklayer snatching a quiet pipe behind a wheelbarrow his wrath arose mightily.

"What do you think you're paid for? Get on with your job, if you don't want to get fired pretty sharp."

"All right, boss," rejoined the workman. "Keep your 'air on. Rome wasn't built in a day, you know."

"That may be," rejoined the hustler, "but I wasn't foreman of that job."

* * *

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A new style in clothing or a new device in a household article may be found among advertisements. It therefore pays to read advertisements carefully if you wish to keep up with the changes.

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Stuart's Calcium Wafers will make you happy because your face will be a welcome sight not only to yourself when you look into the glass, but to everybody else who knows you and talks with you.

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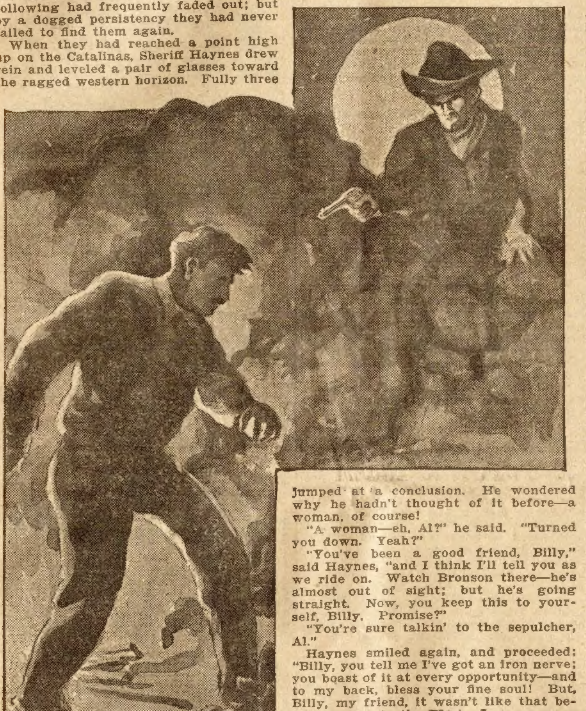
OUT WEST STORIES

His Last Tribute

By Hapsburg Liebe

YOUNG Sheriff Albert Haynes was tired, dead tired, and he knew his deputy was dead tired. So were their lanky, sweating horses. The two men had pushed their mounts hard for two days along the rocky trails of the Catalina Peaks, sweltering under a burning sun that scorched the uneven surface of the ground and made it seem like a gigantic furnace top. The tracks of the horse ridden by the man they were following had frequently faded out; but by a dogged persistency they had never failed to find them again.

When they had reached a point high up on the Catalinas, Sheriff Haynes drew rein and leveled a pair of glasses toward the ragged western horizon. Fully three miles away he saw a lone and weary man on a weary horse. He gave the glasses over to Hitchcock, who jubilated the moment he had had a fair look:



"Don't reach for the revolver, Bronson; I'm a fine shot."

"It's him—it's Bronson!"

"Yes," said Haynes, "it's Bronson. He's a good horseman, all right; but his judgment of this part of the world is bad—he's heading straight for the Black Cactus Desert, and the chances are that he hasn't a quart of water. Those confounded Easterners——"

He broke off suddenly. Perhaps it was because their horses were having a bit of exceedingly rough traveling, perhaps because he was an Easterner himself.

"Look here, Al," Hitchcock said quietly and earnestly, after a few minutes of silence except for the beating of their horses' hoofs on the hot stones, "I want to ask you something. I've been wantin' to ask it for a long time. Al, you're a big man, and a fightin' man; but you're a sad man for all o' that, and so I've reasoned it out that somethin' happened to you back at home, back East. I want to share your trouble, Al. I've been with you a lot, and I've liked you and stuck to you, and I think I deserve a chance to sympathize. I've been a good friend, ain't I, Al? Tell me what happened to you back home. It ain't curiosity that makes me ask."

Sheriff Haynes felt carefully at his smooth, sunburned chin, and a faint smile hovered about his rather sensitive mouth. But he did not speak. Billy Hitchcock jumped at a conclusion. He wondered why he hadn't thought of it before—a woman, of course!

"A woman—eh, Al?" he said. "Turned you down. Yeah?"

"You've been a good friend, Billy," said Haynes, "and I think I'll tell you as we ride on. Watch Bronson there—he's almost out of sight; but he's going straight. Now, you keep this to yourself, Billy. Promise?"

"You're sure talkin' to the sepulcher, Al."

Haynes smiled again, and proceeded: "Billy, you tell me I've got an iron nerve; you boast of it at every opportunity—and to my back, bless your fine soul! But, Billy, my friend, it wasn't like that before I came to the West. I was a pampered kid, Billy; and when I got to be a man—when I got out of the hothouse, I wasn't used to life at all. I was a coward—oh, I was such an arrant coward! I was even afraid of the dark. At twenty-three I hardly dared to say that my life was my own. School? Private tutors! But I don't blame my dad; he was a good dad, even if certain parts of his judgment weren't sound. The rest, Billy Hitchcock, may seem puppish to you——

"I met a woman. Billy, she was the finest, sweetest woman in the world. Her eyes were as blue as a bluebird's wing, and soft and deep; her skin was a pure and healthy white; her hair was almost black—all of which makes a splendid combination, as you'll agree. It was long before I could tell her how much I liked her, being a coward and afraid to say my life was my own. We were sitting on an old stone seat among the lilacs. It was in the evening, and Evangeline—sweet, old-fashioned name, Billy, eh?—Evangeline had cut off the electrics on the veranda in order to have the moonlight effect. The scent of the lilacs was about us; it—but I can't describe it, being no poet.

"When I told her, Billy, whispering it tremulously, she sat very still for a whole minute. And when she spoke, this is what she said to me, Billy, my friend:

"'I love you, too. You are an adorable boy. But—but you are not like my people; they were all army officers, all brave men, all fighting men. Come back for me, Albert, when you are like them. I'll wait for you!'

"Then she put her arms around my neck, Billy, there among the blooming lilacs; she kissed me once, and ran from me, and she left one little, warm tear on my face. I waited an hour for her to return. But she didn't come back.

"So I decided that I'd come out here and either get the cowardice out of me or be planted in some quiet graveyard. You know the rest. You remember my fight with the greaser bunch, in behalf of an old Indian—on my first day in Santa Maria, it was; it seemed that Providence caused that bunch to cross my path. You know about my joust with the bully of the Bar-T, and about my getting the sheriff job. When my term is out, as it will be very soon, I'm going back to Evangeline; I can tell her truthfully that I'm not a coward any more. And Billy, I wish you even greater success as the sheriff of Santurn County than I've had."

Billy Hitchcock was running without opposition, and there was no doubt about his being elected to succeed Haynes.

"Thanks, Al," replied Hitchcock. He continued: "The girl knows where you are—yeah?"

"No," was the answer. "She didn't say to write to her. She said for me to come back when—but I told you that. And now, Billy, let's talk business:

"Bronson is heading straight for the Black Cactus, bent on leaving one more bleaching skeleton on those red-hot wastes. If we both go on, we may not have sufficient grub and water to last; so I think it would be better for me to take your grubsack and canteens and ride on alone, and let you return to Santa Maria to care for things there during my absence. Hold—better keep one meal for yourself, Billy."

With a broad smile, Hitchcock slung his grubsack and canteens across Haynes' saddle front.

"A chew o' tobacco the size of a full-grown wildcat's head is all I want to carry me back to Santa Maria, and I've sure got the chew. S'long, Al, and good luck to you!"

"So long!" echoed Haynes, and they separated.

Haynes soon reached the lower ground, where traveling was much better. He spurred his tired horse, and flinched himself because he knew it was brutal. He knew the little roan was giving him all the speed it could make. But he had not failed to get a single man during his almost a term as sheriff of Santurn County—and then there was the possibility that Bronson would lose himself in the desert and die accordingly. Bronson was wanted badly; he was an absconding bank cashier from New York City, and the telegram telling Haynes to hold him at Santa Maria had come just one hour too late.

The sun turned red, and hid itself behind the ragged horizon. A coyote yapped in the distance. A chaparral cock made a noise like a wooden rattle. A tarantula hawk whipped past the officer's face. Darkness fell, and another coyote yapped.

Still Sheriff Albert Haynes rode on toward the Black Cactus.

He reached the beginning of the desert proper some two hours after nightfall. There he drew rein and sat on one side of his saddle, his gray eyes searching the silent wastes in every direction for a campfire. He saw no sign. Then his eyes became riveted on a small square of white lying on the ground a yard to the left of his horse's forefeet.

He dismounted and picked up a photograph, which had been dropped face downward. A match crackled. Sheriff Albert Haynes went pale as death. In his hand he held a recent photograph of his Evangeline! Was she his Evangeline, or Bronson's?—for he had no

---

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doubt that Bronson had been the loser of the picture. He wondered.

Haynes dropped to the sand beside his worn-out horse, and spent an hour in thinking deeply, at the end of which he had exonerated Evangeline. Bronson, said those who had seen him alight from the cars at Santa Maria, was a fine-looking man, athletic, strong, open of countenance; Bronson had not been a criminal long. And Haynes told himself in behalf of his former sweetheart that he couldn't reasonably expect a woman to wait three years without a word from him.

He arose to his feet, his right hand still holding tightly the likeness of Evangeline—the woman of the deep, soft blue eyes, the ivory skin, the almost black hair. A terrible thought had stung him to the heart: If he arrested Bronson, it would be a poor tribute to his great love for Evangeline, surely. A poor last tribute!

But he had sworn to carry out the duties of an officer without regard for his personal feelings. He had always been a man of his word. He lighted a match and stooped, his gray eyes—hard gray eyes now—scanning the sand for the tracks of Bronson's horse. And when he found the tracks, he knew that Bronson had turned back from the desert.

A week passed. Haynes and his man played hide-and-seek through the Catalinas during that week, never nearer than a quarter-mile, never farther apart than a league. Haynes had grown thin from starving. He had thought to starve Bronson into a surrender; but he had found that the absconding cashier had bought a goodly supply of food from a greaser gold-hunter.

Then Haynes, by a bit of strategy, put himself between his man and the retreats in the Catalinas. Bronson rode desperately for the desert. Haynes raised his revolver to fire; but he couldn't do it. And then the little roan fell and broke a foreleg.

Albert Haynes shot the horse, reloaded the empty chamber, and went afoot after Bronson. It was night when he had reached the edge of the desert. He plunged on, although he had now neither water nor food, and was already half-delirious from lack of it. At midnight he reached the crest of a low hill, where he paused to look for a campfire.

For he knew that Bronson, if he stopped, would have a fire. He knew about the strange powers of the desert night's black stillness, and how hard and smothering they were upon the soul of a lone man. And his watching was rewarded.

Across a shallow valley, he saw the reflection of a firelight on the side of a high, gray bowlder. He felt carefully at his sunburned chin, and started toward the reflection, making each step silently. And in his right hand he held his revolver cocked and ready.

Bronson's fire was small, and it had been made of catclaw and greasewood brush; it was in a nest of huge bowlders, and well hidden except for the one little, telltale reflection that had attracted the notice of the determined but half-delirious Haynes. Haynes stole into the nest of bowlders as cautiously as though his life depended upon his not making the slightest sound, and soon he was staring straight at the absconding cashier. Bronson's face and hands were sunburned to the redness of a beet, and there was an ugly, stubby beard on his jaw.

Bronson had placed his saddle conveniently near him; he stretched himself out stiffly on the sand, pillowing his head on the leather, after which he covered his eyes with his black felt hat.

Haynes was at the greatest barrier of his life. His body and will-power weakened by starving, famishing, and lack of sleep, there was nothing in all the world but Evangeline—nothing, nothing. He slipped his big, blue revolver into its holster, and began to retreat silently. He couldn't arrest Evangeline's sweetheart! The photograph in his pocket was pleading, pleading——

But in his backward movement he stumbled noisily, reeling out into a shaft of the firelight. Bronson sat up quickly and nervously; his right hand flew out, and a short revolver blazed from it, the bullet passing through the fleshy part of Haynes' left forearm. Haynes recovered himself, and darted behind a bowlder before Bronson could fire again; then he clambered up the side of the great stone, and covered his man before the latter was aware of his new position.

"Drop that gun, Bronson, or I'll kill you." It came quietly; but in it there had been an underlying tremolo that had not failed to reach the understanding of the absconding cashier.

Since I must——" The weapon fell from Bronson's hand to the ground, and Bronson raised his wide, hungry eyes to those of the man above him. For a few seconds the two stared hard; then Bronson lowered his gaze in a way that was pitiful.

Haynes tossed the photograph he had found to the feet of his prisoner. Bronson picked it up, looked at it, recognized it, and thrust it into his pocket.

"Thanks," he mumbled. "I—I had missed it. I'm glad you found it for me. I prize it highly."

So there had been no mistake concerning the person who had lost the picture. Haynes had found himself hoping during the moment just gone that there had been a mistake.

"Her name——" began Haynes, and stopped.

"Evangeline," supplied Bronson.

No, there had been no mistake.

"Evangeline Durand—I knew her." Haynes' voice came low and absently, and it sounded weak and strange.

"Yes, Evangeline Durand. You're from the East, sheriff? She has never been in the West. Your arm's bleeding—sorry I shot you."

"Let it bleed. Bronson, you're an awful scoundrel. With the love of a woman like her a decent man's life would have been glorified beyond the point of becoming a criminal. You're no decent man, Bronson—don't reach for the revolver, Bronson! I'm a fine shot."

Bronson shoved the little, short-barreled weapon from him with his foot. He looked up with a drawn countenance.

"I'm not a criminal, sheriff," he said. "I thought I saw a fine——"

"You thought you saw a fine investment—the old, old story," interrupted Haynes, his red eyes glaring wildly. "It's no excuse whatever. You're not worthy of the affections of Evangeline. You'd better die right here in the Black Cactus, Bronson; Evangeline, splendid as she is, is only a woman, and will forget. She forgot me, and she can forget you. I—I think that the best thing—I can do for Evangeline is to kill you, Bronson!"

The big blue revolver was being trained squarely for the heart of the man on the ground. Bronson saw the light of delirium in the red eyes of his captor. He saw the blue cylinder begin to turn up a cartridge to the hammer. He went white under the beet-red.

"Hold!" he cried hoarsely. "Man, if you ever loved Evangeline, you surely couldn't bring yourself to the point of killing her husband!"

"Married!" gasped Haynes. The revolver fell a few inches.

"Yes," affirmed Bronson, quickly. "I'm on my way to Mexico City, where she is to meet me. And she will be alone—alone. Her people have thrown her up. She has nothing but me in all the world."

Haynes saw miles and miles beyond the face of the absconding cashier. He saw to Mexico City, and he saw a poor, lone woman wandering here and there, searching, searching for the man to whom she had given her name, her heart, her hand. He saw tears of pain and sadness on the beautiful, ivory cheeks——

He bent his head, and covered his eyes with his left hand, and the blood from his wounded forearm began to drip from his elbow instead of from his little finger. The revolver in his right hand hung loosely against the side of the bowlder. Should he allow Bronson to go, and thereby break his oath of office? Should he?

He didn't look below him for a whole minute. When he did look, Bronson was gone. The big revolver dropped from the bowlder to the ground, beside the low-burned fire. He raised both his arms toward the still, black zenith, and the blood from his wounded forearm trickled to his side instead of from his elbow.

He tried to say something about a last tribute to Evangeline; but the words wouldn't come. He wound a handkerchief about his wounded arm, stretched himself out on the bowlder, and slept the troubled sleep of delirium.

Haynes awoke at daybreak. His temples throbbed, and his throat was parched and dry. The air was thick and rough to breathe. He sat up, and his fevered eyes sent their gaze over the ground below him. He saw a canteen, Bronson's canteen. Well, Bronson would never get out of the desert now—yes, he would. Bronson had a horse, and he was near enough to the Catalinas to see them and be guided by them.

Haynes crept dizzily from the bowlder, and picked up the canteen. It was perfectly dry inside. He groaned and sank to the ground. Then another thing caught his eye—purposely, no doubt, Bronson had left behind the photograph.

Haynes picked it up and held it at arm's length, a sorrowful smile hovering about his dry lips. It was such a pitiful payment for his devotion and his debasement. He began to mumble deliriously to it. He kissed it, and thrust it into his pocket; but it wouldn't stay there, and he took it out to look at it again. He sank back to an elbow, muttering with weak reproof:

"And you—you forgot!"

The face of the photograph smiled. Haynes rubbed at his red eyes, and looked again. Yes, it smiled to him.

"And you—you forgot!"

He sank back, and lay still. For three hours he was barely conscious. The hot sun crept around a bowlder and found him, and he sat up. He saw one of those wild hounds of the desert, a coyote, watching him hungrily and eagerly.

"Waiting, eh?"

He drew his revolver and fired; but his aim was bad, and he missed by a foot.

"You're waiting, you coyotes, to eat the flesh of the man who couldn't forget his Evangeline; the man who broke his oath of office as a last tribute to his sweetheart——"

He fired at another slender muzzle that had come in sight. Again he missed his mark.

"You shan't have me!" He wabbled to his feet, and shook his fist at a scurrying gray body. "You shan't—I say you shan't! I'll dig a hole and bury myself——"

He staggered from the nest of bowlders, and began to make his way uncertainly across the level surface of the shallow valley. When he had found a place free from stones, he dropped to his knees and began to scoop a hole in the red-hot sand with his hands. The problem of covering himself had not yet entered his fevered brain.

At noon he had sunk a ditch six feet long and two feet deep; but the exertion had drawn so hard upon his waning energies that he fainted at the completion of his work. He was lying inert, half in and half out of the shallow grave, when Billy Hitchcock found him.

Hitchcock was accustomed to the ways of the desert. He knew that Haynes' greatest need was for water. In the passing of a few seconds he had the head of the insensible man in the hollow of his left arm, and was forcing water through the cracked and bleeding lips.

"Just in time, Al," he kept saying. "Just in time."

Haynes opened his eyes, drank a few

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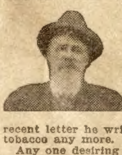

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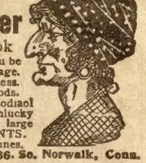

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swallows of the precious liquid that gurgled from Hitchcock's canteen, and recognized the sympathetic, sunburned face above him.

"You were always a good friend, Billy," he whispered. After a few minutes, he went on in a stronger tone: "Billy, I've disgraced myself eternally. I caught Bronson last night. He was recently married to Evangeline, and was on his way to Mexico City to meet her there. I let him go."

"Caught Bronson last night!" exclaimed Hitchcock. "But," he continued, "you didn't break your oath, old pal. No, sirree, you sure didn't do that."

"Why?" There was a bit of hope in Haynes' voice.

"Say," smiled Hitchcock, "you've lost all track o' time, old pal. Your term as sheriff of Santurn County was out yesterday, and Billy Hitchcock, your humble servant, is in your place!"

"Billy, is—is that true?"

"As sure as green apples," said Sheriff Hitchcock. "Now let me get you on my hoss, and to Santa Maria we go in a whoop!"

To Albert Haynes it was a difficult matter to take up the broken and tangled threads of life. For two weeks he wandered here and there about Santa Maria, looking for something to do, some business to go into for the sake of work and attendant forgetfulness. But he was hard to satisfy; nothing appealed to him. He hadn't realized what it was to lose an Evangeline until he had lost her; the world seemed so cold, so desolate, so little worth while. Perhaps it went harder with him because he couldn't whine to his friends; they would have been glad to offer their sympathies—but he couldn't whine.

In despair Haynes turned his slow footsteps once more toward the office he had occupied for two years, that of the sheriff of Santurn County. He found Billy Hitchcock sitting upon an empty powder can, with his feet in the window.

"Come in, Al!" Hitchcock kicked another empty powder can from beneath a small table at his left.

"Thanks," murmured Haynes, and accepted the seat. He leaned his head forward into his hands.

"Heart still botherin'. Yeah?" Hitchcock's voice was low and kind.

"I'm troubled about the oath," Haynes evaded. "I meant to break it, and it wasn't my fault that I didn't."

"Say," said Hitchcock, taking his feet from the window and setting them on the floor with a thud—"Say, Al, I've been thinkin'. That was the finest piece of nerve in the world, that breakin' your oath—as you thought you was doin'—as a last tribute to your old sweetheart. It was the finest sacrifice I ever heard tell about, my good friend Al. You give up the most precious thing on earth for the sake of somebody else. And Bronson'll tell her, as sure as green apples, and I'll bet you a green-striped hoss that she writes to you and thanks you. Yes, sir, Al Haynes, by gar, I takes off my old hat to you!"

"I appreciate it," said Haynes, almost in a whisper.

Then Hitchcock saw farther.

"But Al," he went on, "ain't it the loss o' the woman that's got you down—more'n the breakin' o' the oath? Own up, now, for I'm your pal, and got a right to know."

"Yes," admitted Haynes.

The old postmaster stepped into the sheriff's office. In his hand he held a square, white envelope bearing a special delivery stamp, an envelope that had been addressed in a firm and strong but feminine chirography. He gave it to Haynes, smiled, and left.

Haynes knew the handwriting. He went to his feet nervously, and nervously tore away one end of the square, white envelope. A faint violet scent came from the folded sheets when he drew them out.

Hitchcock, too, went to his feet. His eyes watched the face of his friend closely for some sign of pleasure or displeasure. He saw Haynes' hard gray eyes gradually become soft, as one page after another was turned.

Then Haynes sank to his seat on the powder can, with his mouth jerking. He held the letter up to Hitchcock.

"Read it, Billy. I can't tell it."

"It's from Evangeline—yeah?"

The handwriting was plain, and the new sheriff went through the pages as rapidly as Haynes had gone through them.

"Now, don't that just beat the Joneses!" he jubilated, when he had finished. "She's in New York, and she's just had a letter from Bronson in Mexico, who was an admirer! Bronson wanted to tell her what a fine fellow you was—and God 'lmighty bless his lowdown bones for doin' it. So he played on your sympathies, Al, by sayin' he was married to Evangeline. And she says that you've got the damnedest—not exactly that, neither—but the very finest nerve on earth. Say, now, Al Haynes, what did I tell you! Oh, but I'm sorry I've been a-cussin' that woman under my breath for two weeks! But the best part of the letter, Al, blast your blessed old hide! is where she says she can't wait, and that she's meetin' you in St. Louis, and that may Heaven guard you, her precious boy! Al, by gar, I've been thinkin'; if they're as sweet as that, I'm lookin' up a female for myself right off!"

He reached down and took Haynes by the hand, and wrung it hard.

⁂

Pursued.

"Every time I hear anything about a man's selecting a wife I have to laugh!" remarked Diggins to his Aunt Hepsy.

"Men all think they choose their wives, and wise old ladies, who ought to know everything, go ahead talking about men's choosing wives just as if it were a fact.

"Men are conceited about most things, but there is not one of them that catches on to the fact when a girl is after him.

"Oh, I am not counting professional lady killers! Of course they all know when a girl is after them, but I mean real men. A real man is an amateur at the love-making game, and he never realizes that he is being pursued

"There's Fowser. He thought he was breaking his neck after Mabel Geezer. He said he would have her at any cost. He would not take no for an answer. He used to dislocate himself getting into a change of collars when he could have pulled through another day or two with the collar he had on. He used to buy ties.

"Let me say that when a man buys ties he is in a bad way. Usually a man wears a tie, the same tie, every day until it falls to pieces. Then he gets another, no matter how many neglected ties he may have. But when a man thinks he is pursuing a woman he wears a different tie every day.

"And so Fowser wore a different tie every day. And when Mabel saw that she had him going good and strong she set an even hotter pace. The fact was that Mabel started the whole business, although Fowser didn't know it, and Mabel was keeping it going and he didn't know that either.

"Every time Fowser met her he thought it was an accidental meeting. It used to hurt me to keep from smiling, because I knew that the girl nearly worked herself to death getting to where the accidental meeting took place.

"If he had been a lawyer she would have brought suit against somebody, hired Fowser, and snagged him during the consultations. If he had been a doctor she would have had an awful spell of something and called him in

"Anyway, she was lying in wait for him at every corner, and all the time he thought he was chasing her. He thought he was the cunning old fox when she accidentally let it slip that she was going to be at such and such a place at such and such a time.

"Yes, mighty few men ever catch on, my dear aunt. If some one were to tell a man he was being pursued he wouldn't believe it, and if he ever did happen to believe it, my! you wouldn't be able to see him for dust!

"When a man thinks he is selecting a wife he never knows what's being done to him any more than if he had taken gas."

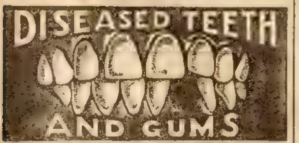
⁂

All Off.

A man very much out of breath ran into the railway station and made a wild rush for the ticket-seller's window. A few moments later he came back and sat down with an air of dejection.

"So you missed your train," remarked his neighbor. "I suppose there was a woman at the ticket-window hunting for her pocketbook?"

"Worse than that," replied the disappointed one. "There was a fat man trying to get through the turnstile."



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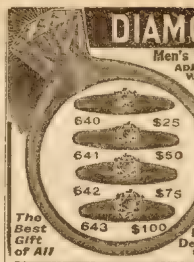

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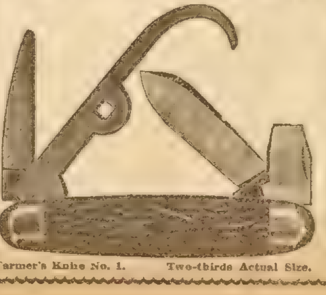
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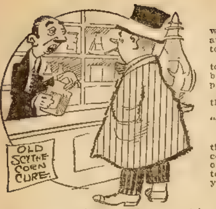


The Druggist—"You want ten cents' worth?"

The Customer—"About that. What do you charge for ten cents' worth?"

A Doubtful Honor.

At the battle of W—— an Irishman went to rush into the thickest of the fight.

"Stand back," said the captain, "I mean to get a Victoria cross."

Just then a cannon ball took his head off. Pat then turned to the army and said·

"Are there any more of ye wanting a Victoria cross?"

Peaceable.

Mr. Fountenpen had been calling upon Mae for some time.

One evening the girl's mother met him at the door

"Young man," she said belligerently, "I want to know what your intentions are."

"I—er—ma'am," stammered the youth, backing away. "My—er—intentions, I may say, are entirely peaceable."

Had Been in Prison.

The case had been long protracted and was going none too well for the defendant. His counsel, therefore, had recourse to bullying methods

One of the plaintiff's witnesses, a notorious old jailbird, had just left the box, his place being taken by an old plasterer

"Have you ever been in prison?" asked the barrister.

"Yes, sir," replied the witness—"twice"

"Ah! And for how long, may I ask?"

"First time for an afternoon. Second time for about an hour. You see, sir," continued the witness, taking advantage of the barrister's confusion, "I was sent to prison to whitewash a cell for a lawyer who had been robbing his clients."

Hard to Answer.

Tommy had just completed his first term at a boarding-school. On the evening of his return home, wishing to impress his little sister with the vastness of his knowledge, he led her to her nursery window, pointed to a star, and said:

"You see that light up there? Well, it's bigger than all this world."

"No, 'taint," replied his sister.

"But I tell you it is," returned the youthful scholar.

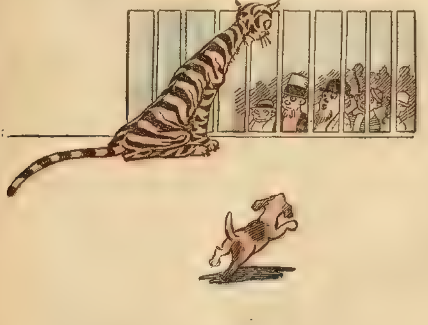
"Then why is it that it can't keep off the rain?" came the baffling retort.

Needed No Watching.

Mrs. Capron saw old Uncle Timothy starting away on a fishing expedition, and, knowing how hard his wife worked, thought it a good time to reprove him for his laziness.

"Timothy," she said, "do you think it's right to leave your wife at the tub while you pass your time fishing?"

"Yassum, miss," replied the old colored man; "it's all right. Mah wife don' need any watching. She'll wuk jes' as hard as if I was dah."



The Pup (gayly advancing to the attack)—"I'm a devil for cats!"

The Easiest for Mary Ann.

"Me daughter, Mary Ann," said the newly rich Mrs. Cassidy, "wants to l'arn to play some music insthrument. I wonder w'at wan would come aisiest to her?"

"Well, now," replied the jealous and caustic Mrs Casey, "if ye could only get somethin' that's built like a washboard 'twould be jist the thing."

Too Often.

According to the Washington Star, Mr. George Ade was sitting with a little girl of eight, who looked up from her "Hans Christian Andersen" and asked·

"Does m-i-r-a-g-e spell marriage, Mr Ade?"

"Often, my child," said the cynical bachelor.

Cruelty.

The Senator and the Major were walking up the avenue. The Senator was more than middle-aged and considerably more than fat, and, dearly as the Major loved him, he also loved his joke

The Senator turned with a pleased expression on his benign countenance and said: "Major, did you see that pretty girl smile at me?"

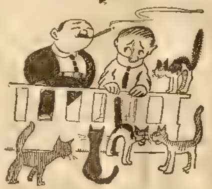
"Oh, that's nothing," replied his friend. "The first time I saw you I laughed out loud"

A Bonanza.

A certain Congressman had disastrous experience in gold-mine speculations. One day a number of his colleagues were discussing the subject of speculation, when one of them said to this Western member:

"Old chap, as an expert give us a definition of the word 'bonanza.'"

"A 'bonanza,'" replied the Western man with emphasis, "is a hole in the ground owned by a champion liar!"



Hampton—"So your wife has nothing around the house but cats?"

Rhodes—"Yes, but I drew the line when she began to feed me catfish and catnip tea."

It Began Again.

A well-known preacher was making a pedestrian excursion in a wild rural district in the west of Connemara. Feeling rather hungry, he looked at his watch to see if it was nearly dinner time, but found the watch was stopped. Just then, happening to meet with a country boy, he asked him

"What time is it, my boy?"

"Just 12, sir."

"Only 12?" said the minister. "I thought it was more."

"It never is more round these parts," said the boy, simply. "It begins again at 1."

Quick Wasn't the Word.

Her soldier son in the Philippines had sent a cablegram, and Mrs. Blunderleigh's voice rang with pride when speaking of it to her impressed neighbors.

"Yes, they be wonderful things, the telegraphs," said she. "Just fancy, it's come from the Philippines—all the thousands of miles."

"And so quick, too," put in her best friend

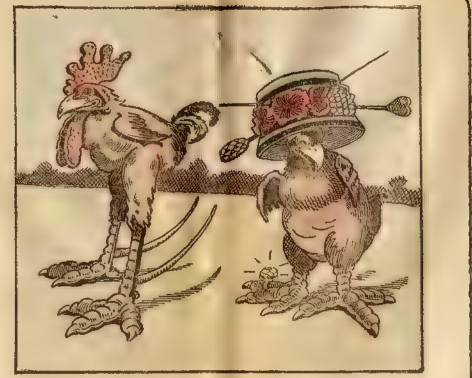
"Quick ain't the word for it," put in Mrs. Blunderleigh. "Why, when I got it the gum on the envelope wasn't dry."

Got Rid of Them.

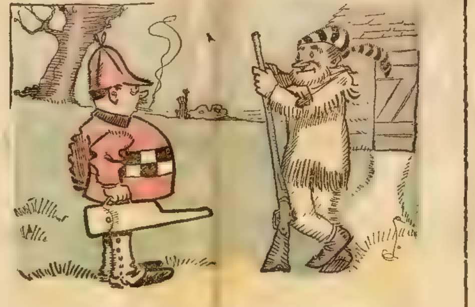
Girl friends love one another. One day two of them met.

"Fred didn't blow his brains out because you jilted him the other night," said friend No. 1. "He came over and proposed to me."

"Did he?" replied friend No. 2. "Then he must have got rid of them in some other way"



The Hen (looking at the rooster's spurs)—"And still they have the nerve to talk about hat pins!"



Hunter—"You work by the hour?"
Guide "No; by the day."
Hunter—"But suppose I shoot you before the day's up—I'd be out then."

It Helped Business.

"I always aim to have some Shakespeare in my theater during the winter," said the manager of the Punkintown opera house.

"You think the public demands it?"

"Nope But it helps business in the long run. It makes 'em appreciate 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' and 'Ten Nights in a Barroom'"

A Still Hunt.

Nervous Wife—"I hear a burglar"

Nervous Husband—"Woo! I'll crawl under the bed and see if he is there."

No Alibi.

After listening to the charge made by the police officer, the judge returned to the prisoner and said:

"Did I understand you to say you had an alibi?"

"No, your honor," replied the prisoner. "I'm a poor man, and my lawyer wanted $25 extra to furnish one."—Judge's Quarterly

Great Experience.

A man who had been troubled with bronchitis for a long time called on a rather noted doctor. After a few questions the doctor told him he had a common ailment that would readily yield to treatment.

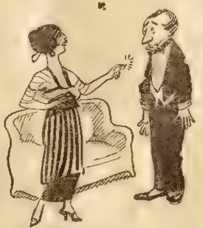
"You're so sure you can cure my bronchitis," said the man, "you must have had great experience with it."

"Why, my dear sir," confided the doctor, "I've had it myself for over twenty years!"

She Wondered Why.

It was the annual convention of a woman's organization in a Western State. The Panama Canal was under discussion. A lady from the sagebrush lands attracted the leader's attention.

"What I want to know is," she questioned, breezily, "why, when the climate is so terribly dangerous on the isthmus, did they ever go 'way down there to build the canal, anyhow?"



Miss Snipp—"Take back your ring, Mr. Sharpe I love another!"

Mr. Sharpe—"Please mention that I have a ring for sale—the sucker's got to have one!"

Never Saw a Sunrise.

An artist was one day showing a young woman over his studio. After she had critically examined all the pictures she remarked:

"I notice several sunsets among your works, but not a single sunrise. How's that?"

The artist, who was rather noted for his bohemian habits, blushed a little at the question and then stammered

"You see, it's this way: To tell the truth, the reason I've not painted a sunrise is because I'm never up at that time."

Capping the Climax.

"Yes!" sighed the opera manager, "we had a pretty rough season every way. But what took the sand out of me was the row between De Recker, the leading ence De Recker has? Well, he stepped on You know what an awkward stage presence De Recker has? Well, he stepped on Squalchi's train thirteen times during one performance, and the next night she came on as Marguerite in bloomers. That came mighty near breaking us."—Puck.

Served Him Right.

An actor who recently was "taken" while on the stage by a cinematograph was greatly pleased with the result. Talking of it to a prominent dramatic critic, he said:

"It was the most extraordinary experience I ever went through—actually to see myself acting."

"Now," replied the critic, "you will understand what we have to put up with."

Water in His Ear.

Gus Miller, a traveling man, paused to watch a small colored youth who stood on one foot, inclined his woolly head far to one side, and pounded vigorously on his skull with the palm of his right hand.

"Hello, kid!" grinned the drummer, whose memory was carried back to his own boyhood days by the familiar action. "What are you doing?"

"Got watah in mah ear," announced the boy

"Oh-ho," laughed the drummer, "I know just how that is. I often have felt like that after being in swimming."

"Swimmin' nuffin'!" the youth exclaimed, disdainfully. "Ah been eatin' watahmillyun."

On Purpose.

Magistrate—"Pat Murphy, the constable says you were fighting. What have you to say for yourself?"

Pat Murphy—"Well, your worship, Oi had a clean white shirt on, an' Oi was so mighty proud av it that Oi got up a bit av a row wid a man so as Oi cud take me coat an' vest off and show it."

Country Joys.

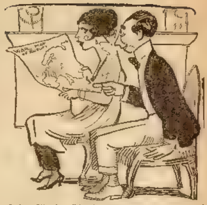
Suburban Resident—"It's simply fine to wake up in the morning and hear the leaves whispering outside your window."

City Man—"It's all right to hear the leaves whisper, but I never could stand hearing the grass mown!"

Very Unhappy.

Silicus—"What's the matter, old man? You look unhappy."

Cynicus—"I am I'm almost as unhappy as a woman with a secret that nobody wants to know."



Miss High—"And, after all, this world is a small place, don't you think?"

Billy Chi—"Oh, not at all—it only looks so, compared with Chicago."

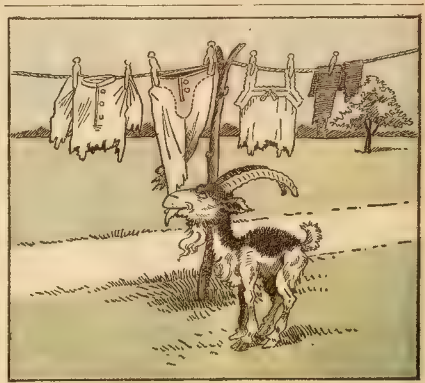
Absent-Minded.

Hobson, who is, to say the least, a little absent-minded, was on his way to his own wedding, when something impeded the progress of the carriage, which stood at a standstill so long that Hobson put his head out of the window and said to the driver: "Hurry up, or the whole thing will be over before we get there!"

Wise Cowardice.

The altitude record for frankness is held by a successful London business man who lately retired at the age of 81.

"I attribute whatever success I have had," he says, "to my cowardice. I always feared to wade in so deep that it was difficult to wade out."



BARGAIN NOTE—"All underwear one-third off."

A Good Reason.

"Tommy," said his mother, "do you think you'll get a prize in school for being good?"

"No'm," said Tommy

"Why not, sir?" asked his father, sternly, laying down his paper.

"Because they don't give any," answered Tommy, meekly.

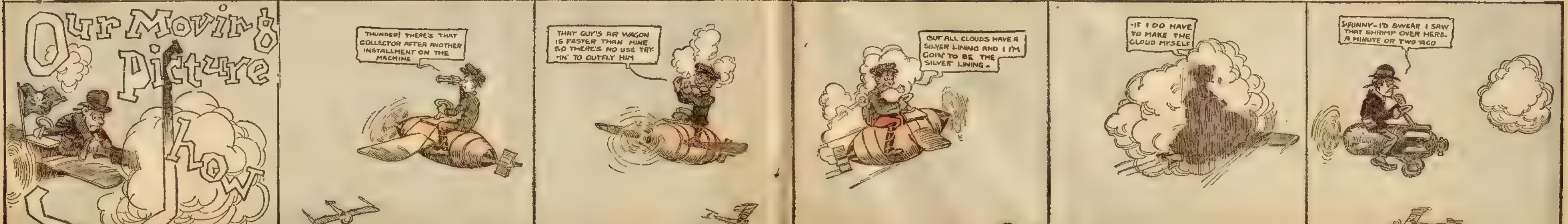
Not Through.

"How long hev you been a printer?" inquired a young native who had percolated into the composing-room of the Polkville (Ark.) Weekly Clarion

"Been setting type for twenty-seven years," replied the veteran.

"Heck!" was the amazed comment. "And ye ain't got it all set yit, neither!"

Aeroplane Andy's Adventures


Our Moving Picture Show
THUNDER! THERE'S THAT COLLECTOR AFTER ANOTHER INSTALLMENT ON THE MACHINE
THAT GUY'S AIR WAGON IS FASTER THAN MINE SO THERE'S NO USE TRY-IN' TO OUTFLY HIM
BUT ALL CLOUDS HAVE A SILVER LINING AND I I'M GOIN' TO BE THE SILVER' LINING.
-IF I DO HAVE TO MAKE THE CLOUD MYSELF
S'FUNNY- I'D SWEAR I SAW THAT SHRIMP OVER HERE. A MINUTE OR TWO AGO

A Wife's Tragedy

Or, The Day of Reckoning

By Granville Osborne

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Begun in No. 39, September 26. Subscriptions can begin with that issue or back copies can be obtained from newsstands, our agents, or by mail from the office of publication.

CHAPTER X.

ON THE following morning Miss Sandbrook presented herself at the cottage punctually at the hour of eleven, and was conducted by Herrick into the presence of Mr. Carew. He was lying upon a couch, which was wheeled into a large bay-window looking out upon a pretty, old-fashioned garden. He was a thin, refined-looking man with a flowing gray beard and mustache, and eyes shaded by dark-colored glasses. He held out his hand eagerly as she advanced towards him, yet, she thought, rather timidly.

"This is so very good of you," he said in a pleasant-toned voice. "Please sit down!"

She did so, at the same time making some sympathetic inquiry as to his health, for which he thanked her, saying he was feeling very much better that morning.

"I have read your story," he said presently. "I want first to say that I think you are a very good and noble woman. On my poor friend's behalf, let me thank you—as I know he would wish—for your devoted friendship, your loving care of his poor young wife." His voice faltered and he stopped rather abruptly.

"I need no thanks from him or from any one," she answered, "and I claim no merit for my love for Geraldine. It was part of my life, and my one happiness was to serve her."

"I am sure of it," he said, "and I can understand, too, from all that I have lately heard, how natural such a feeling must have been."

"Yet her own husband could not trust or believe in her," she said bitterly.

"Ah, I know how you must feel about that!" said Mr. Carew in a sorrowful tone. "Yet I am going to ask you to let me plead with you for a moment on my friend's behalf. Think how terribly appearances were against his wife, how artfully the plan was laid! Surely your knowledge of the world must have shown you that men judge from such an utterly different standpoint from that which women do? I hardly see how you could have expected him to act otherwise. But I know how hard you must find it to forgive him, if indeed you ever can." He broke off with a sigh.

"I do not know," she said slowly. "At one time I thought I never could forgive Lionel Carisforth, but as one grows older, Mr. Carew, and life unfolds its many complications, one sees things in a different light, or the eyes are opened to read between the lines of lives and to understand and be sorry."

Her voice suddenly sank, and for a moment or two there was silence. Mr. Carew covered his eyes with one thin hand.

"At any rate," Miss Sandbrook resumed, "I know now that Mr. Carisforth never read, or even opened, any of the letters I wrote him—if he ever got them, as I sometimes doubt. Then there is some reason to believe, as I have gathered from Mr. Blake, that suspicions had been instilled into his mind even before the final catastrophe occurred."

"Yes, I understood that there had been some gossip in the village," said Mr. Carew, "caused chiefly by Denzil's odd behavior on the day of the wedding. But that, as can easily be seen now, was purposely done to incite it. There is a point in your statement which somewhat puzzles me still, and I am very anxious to have it cleared up."

As he spoke he took up the book, which had been lying beside his couch, and turned to the page where she had related the incident of Mr. Carisforth's having sent for the child.

"Now I was always under the impression," he said, "that the child died at the same place as its poor mother. I am certain that the solicitors, when giving me all the facts of the case, made the same statement. Mr. Graham also says that Mrs. Harper, in telling him her story, made the same assertion. How do you account for it?"

She looked amazed and much concerned.

"It is very strange, indeed," she said. "I can only assure you that I have written down the facts exactly as they occurred that day. Oh, Mr. Carew"—suddenly springing to her feet—"was I deceived after all, and could it have been the work of that fiend Denzil? Do you think that he claimed, villain that he was, to have been its father?"

Mr. Carew was no less agitated. "I must institute fresh inquiries at once about this," he exclaimed; "it is a matter that must be cleared up once and for all. Would you remember at all the appearance of the woman who took the poor child away?"

"Perfectly!" she answered readily. "I never forget a face. I remember her well, agitated at the time though I was. I recollect also that she said she had come from the child's father, and the names were the same. Mr. Carew, do you think that the child really is dead?" she asked excitedly.

"I have seen the certificate of its death," he replied sadly, "and that is another mystery. I am certain that it took place, at the time its mother died, for Mr. Graham showed it to me."

"What opinion have you formed of this wonderful likeness we discovered between poor Geraldine and some unknown lady whom Mr. Blake says he met in the grounds at Carisforth?"

"It is certainly very extraordinary," he replied. "My mind recoils from the supposition of its being any ghostly visitant, yet the likeness must have been a very startling one for you to recognize it. Perhaps, however, it was a mere chance resemblance, brought out more vividly in the sketch than in the reality."

Miss Sandbrook came nearer to him and laid her hand upon his arm.

"Mr. Carew," she said in an awe-stricken tone, "within the last few moments an idea has come to me—wild and visionary, perhaps the very suggestion of which seems to make my brain reel. What if Geraldine's daughter be not dead after all, but living, and that it was she whom Mr. Blake encountered?"

"Merciful Heaven!" cried Mr. Carew, and sank back upon his couch, white and trembling.

Fearful that her words had had too agitating an effect, Miss Sandbrook bent over him in alarm; but he was able to sign to her to hand him some medicine from a table near at hand, and when he had swallowed it his strength seemed to return.

"Mr. Graham will scold me," she said, thankful to see him revive.

"No, no! It was nothing!" he answered, with his winning smile. "But for a moment your suggestion was so startling, so overwhelming; and I am still such a poor creature. But tell me, why do you think this?"

"I can hardly tell you," she replied, "except for the extraordinary likeness, which has haunted me ever since I saw it. As I have told you, Geraldine's child strongly resembled her as an infant. Oh, Mr. Carew, how can we find out the truth? I must and will discover who this lady is!"

They parted with a warm hand pressure, and Helena Sandbrook walked home, her mind busy with conflicting thoughts, whilst in the room she had left Mr. Carew had covered his face with his thin hands, and was murmuring——

"Blind—oh, how blind!"

CHAPTER XI.

ON WEDNESDAY afternoon Lance called at Carisfoth, and was shown into the drawing-room where Mrs. Carisforth was sitting alone. She rose and greeted him, he fancied, with a shade less of cordiality than formerly in her manner. "My son is in his study," she said, as they shook hands and she ordered the servant to tell his master.

They sat down, and after the usual commonplaces had been disposed of, the conversation decidedly flagged. There was a vague feeling of something uncomfortable in the atmosphere—a kind of suppressed antagonism in Mrs. Carisforth's manner which made Lance thankful for the entrance of her son.

"Where is your friend today?" was Denzil's first inquiry after greeting him.

"He is not able to leave his patient this afternoon," answered Lance. "He asked me to express his regrets to you and Mrs. Carisforth."

"What kind of a man is this Mr. Carew?" suddenly asked Mrs. Carisforth in her abrupt way.

"Oh, he is very nice," said Lance—"a great invalid, you know, but very cheerful over it!"

"Now, Mr. Blake, confess! Is there not a mystery about him?" continued Mrs. Carisforth. "I feel sure that there is."

"Dear me—why?" asked Lance, looking very innocent.

"Oh, because I do—a woman's reason!" she answered. "We have intuitions, you know, about things. I can't explain it."

"Well, I have not seen anything very suspicious about Mr. Carew——" began Lance, when she stopped him by dashing in suddenly with——

"You have known him some time, I dare say?"

Lance was a little exercised what to reply to this very searching question, and was still considering when happily a diversion occurred, though one of a rather startling nature. For at this point the door was opened and the footman announced——

"Miss Sandbrook!"

Yes, here she was; but not arrayed, as usual—and in the only way Lance had yet seen her—in the blue cloth walking dress and plain sailor hat. A stylish and well-made gown of black, relieved with white, fitted her slim figure to perfection and trailed in graceful folds at her feet, whilst a large black picture hat with long feathers completed a very effective and elegant costume.

But after a brief look in her direction Lance's regard was for the effect of this sudden appearance upon his host and hostess. So far no symptoms of discomposure appeared on either face. Mrs. Carisforth's showed some slight mystification, but Denzil's was blank. Either he failed to recognize his visitor, or it took a great deal to put him out of countenance, Lance decided.

With merely a slight inclination of her head in Mrs. Carisforth's direction Miss Sandbrook went straight up to where Denzil was standing.

"Do you remember me?" she asked, looking him full in the face.

"No, I cannot say that I do," he drawled, in a tone which immediately convinced Lance that he did, and also made

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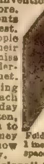

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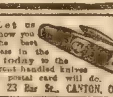

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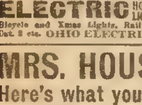

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that young gentleman long to knock him down.

"Perhaps this lady would prefer to speak with you alone, Denzil, as her visit seems to be to you?" put in Mrs. Carisforth, in whose manner some signs of disturbance began now to show themselves. Perhaps she, too, had read her son's tone. "Mr. Blake, you and I will have a stroll in the garden."

But before Lance could comply, Miss Sandbrook interposed and detained them.

"On no account," she said decisively. "I should greatly prefer you both to remain. What I have come to say to this gentleman, I would wish all the world to hear, if possible."

"I think she must be a little mad," said Mrs. Carisforth in a whisper to Lance, as, half inclined to withdraw, she yet lingered, as if in fear of she knew not what.

"Let me refresh your memory," Miss Sandbrook continued, keeping her gaze fixed upon Denzil. "You cannot, I think, have altogether forgotten coming to my lodgings one evening in September, sixteen years ago, and having an interview there with Mrs. Carisforth, your cousin's wife?"

Before Denzil could open his lips to reply Mrs. Carisforth, with blazing eyes and face distorted with rage, had sprung forward and faced Miss Sandbrook.

"Not that name!" she almost screamed. "We will not hear it—will not have it mentioned here! Let us forget that most wretched woman, who——"

"Silence!" cried Miss Sandbrook, in an authoritative voice. "Say what you like of myself to me or any one, but in my presence not one word shall be uttered against my most pure and deeply-wronged friend!"

Mrs. Carisforth fell back, overawed in spite of herself, by the commanding tone and look of the other. For a moment they stood thus, Mrs. Carisforth, with her Medusa-like locks and glaring eyes, looking as if she would tear Miss Sandbrook in pieces. But that lady stood as firm as a rock, and her inscrutable face was set like a stone.

"Miss—er—Sandbrook," Denzil at length remarked, in his slow, sneering tones, "is pleased to be somewhat dramatic, but that perhaps is scarcely to be wondered at, she having once belonged to the theatrical profession."

"I am glad to find that you do remember me," she said quickly. "Now I wish to put a question to you. It is a very important one. Had it not been I should never have overcome my repugnance to put my foot inside your house —of that you may be certain."

"At least I will not retaliate by being as discourteous as you were to me when last we met," Denzil remarked, with a sarcastic smile. "But pray proceed!"

"The question I have to ask you is this," Miss Sandbrook said steadily, "and I charge you to answer it truly. What did you do with the child that you sent your messenger to steal from me during Geraldine Carisforth's last illness? As the mother lay there at the point of death, I allowed her to take it away. I know now that Mr. Lionel Carisforth was not the person who sent that woman for the child."

"Well," said Denzil as she paused, "that is no proof that I did. I should hardly have burdened myself with an infant of those tender years."

"It was some one who acted by your orders, though," she answered. And, as she spoke, she looked towards Mrs. Carisforth, who stood with her handkerchief pressed to her lips to hide their trembling.

"This is ridiculous—monstrous!" Mrs. Carisforth forced herself to say. "Denzil, the woman is mad! Do not listen to her ravings."

"I am perfectly sane, I assure you," said Miss Sandbrook. "I am not making any unfounded assertion when I state that Mr. Lionel Carisforth never sent for the child. He never asked for it, never wished to see it. That I know for a fact."

"Indeed! I was not aware that you were so much in his confidence," sneered Denzil.

"No!" cried his mother fiercely. "How can you possibly have known anything about him? He thoroughly disapproved of your friendship with his wife and would have nothing to do with you."

"That was not surprising," calmly replied Miss Sandbrook. "He had no personal acquaintance with me, and I belonged to a profession against which he entertained a deeply-rooted prejudice. Yet had he known he might have found me more worthy of his trust and confidence than you"—looking at Denzil again—"who betrayed both so cruelly."

"I really cannot see the use of all these animadversions," said Denzil. "You have asked your question and I have answered it. There is no more to be said, so I do not think we need prolong this interview."

"I have not yet finished," Miss Sandbrook said. "It is a pity that you should persist in your denial. You did send that woman to fetch away the child! I want to know where that child is now."

"Really this is becoming intolerable," said Denzil, for the first time showing some symptoms of impatience. "You know as well as I do that the child is long since dead."

"It is not dead!" Miss Sandbrook replied in a solemn and thrilling tone. "It was the child of the daughter of the woman with whom your accomplice lodged, who died and was buried in the name of Ada Carisforth. Geraldine's daughter still lives, as you also, madam, are well aware."

"It is false," Mrs. Carisforth shrieked. "An abominable lie! I know nothing of the child. You can prove nothing against either of us. Only Lionel Carisforth really knew what became of it, and now he is dead, you come forward with this wicked accusation to disturb my son's peace, like your designing friend."

In her blind rage and passion she had raised her voice to such a pitch that no one heard the sound of the door opening.

Two men had entered the room unannounced, and the sight of them had suddenly checked the enraged woman, who, with a wild stare of horror, sank heavily upon an adjacent seat.

In one of the newcomers Lance had immediately recognized Herrick. But who was the other, who walked leaning heavily upon his arm?

He was a bent, gray-haired man of somewhat shrunken figure, but of still handsome feature. Where had he seen a face like and yet not like it? In another instant, it flashed upon him. Gone were the flowing beard, the dark spectacles, the helpless limbs; but, whatever miracle had been accomplished, without any doubt, this was Mr. Carew!

All these thoughts passed like lightning through Lance's mind, and even before he had well made his discovery he was able to perceive, with still greater amazement, the effect of this unexpected appearance upon Mrs. Carisforth. Then, too, he saw a swift, sudden change on Denzil's hard face—a look of unutterable horror and despair—as he staggered back and uttered one word that rang through the silent room.

"Lionel!"

"Yes, Lionel!" There was a new note in the voice that Lance knew—a firmness, that mingled with its unutterable sadness. "Lionel, whom you so bitterly deceived and wronged, whose happiness you destroyed, whose place you would now take. Oh, Denzil—villain, cold-blooded scoundrel that you are—could any hand have wrought such ruin and misery in two lives as yours has? But the day of reckoning is come!"

There was no response from either of the two stony figures before him. He waited a moment and then continued:

"I have come back, not from the grave, though from the very verge of it, to take up my life again with a new purpose. I come to try to atone for my blind, mad folly of the past, my too-ready belief in the deception you so abominably plotted, to find out, once for all, the truth. Thank Heaven, I have done that! I know it all now. I know the whole of your wicked plot that night, and how you effected your entrance into my wife's room.

The gardener Gapp, whom you bribed to aid you, has made a full confession of all. I know how, believing her to be alone and at your mercy, you followed her, and strove to force her into compliance with your base demands. But you were foiled in that attempt."

Still no sound to break the tense silence in the room; no movement of either figure. He resumed:

"It was George Carew who died out in the solitude of the bush. I buried him with my own hands, and it was then that I determined to bury instead Lionel Carisforth. I knew that my beard had altered me greatly. I dreaded to be stared and pointed at as a man with a story, and I determined to return on account of a singular experience, a vision in the night. I suppose most people would call it a dream. I can only say that I know I was wide awake one still moonlight night when she—my wife —appeared to me."

His voice faltered and he paused.

Still there was a deathlike silence in the room.

"'Lionel,' I heard her say distinctly, 'I cannot rest. I never shall until you believe me innocent, as I stand in the sight of Heaven, and prove me so in the sight of men.' Then the vision faded away, but again and yet again on the succeeding nights it came to me, and spoke always the same words. Then my eyes were opened and I saw my fatal, awful error. I determined to return at once, and step by step trace out the truth.

"But I was seized with a severe illness, recovering from which I got about too soon, with the result that I lost temporarily the use of my limbs just when I wished to be most active. In my dire need Heaven sent me the very friend I required." He turned to Herrick with an affectionate look and laid his hand upon his shoulder.

At this point he was interrupted in his narrative. A light step sounded at the door leading out on the terrace, and as the eyes of all present turned towards it, there appeared on the threshold the figure of a slender girl, in a white gown, with curling dark hair and lovely, wistful eyes which gazed wonderingly and half alarmed at the group assembled within.

Suddenly a cry of wonder resounded through the rooms.

"Geraldine, Geraldine! Can the grave give up its dead?"

Lionel Carisforth had risen to his feet, and was standing, with shining eyes and arms outstretched, drinking in the vision before him. But Miss Sandbrook, with a swift movement, had reached the girl and, taking her hand, led her forward and placed it in his.

"Not Geraldine," she said softly, "but Ada Geraldine Carisforth—your daughter!"

CHAPTER XII.

At THESE words Mrs. Carisforth started suddenly from her motionless attitude and sprang to her feet.

"Lionel," she cried wildly, "I did it for the best! I have taken every care of her. I would have restored her to all."

"You have robbed her of her rightful place and position for sixteen years," he answered sternly.

Then, as though he could hear no

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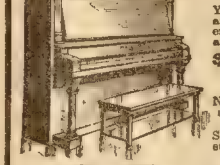

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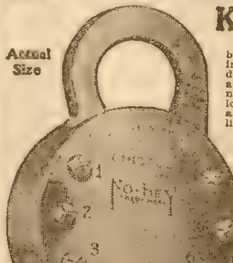

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more, Denzil Carisforth suddenly left his attitude of sullen despair and strode past them all towards the door opening on to the terrace.

There he paused, and turning, faced Lionel with a look of intense hatred.

"You had everything and I nothing!" he cried hoarsely. "If it had not been for you, I could have won Geraldine for my own. You, with your money, came between us. You robbed me of my inheritance and of my love. I vowed I would be revenged on you, and I parted you forever. Nothing can give her back to you!"

Then, with a laugh of triumph, he turned quickly on his heel, went out into the garden, and they heard his voice calling loudly for his horse.

A look of intense agony convulsed Lionel's features, and, relaxing his hold of Ada he sank heavily back into his chair. Herrick was hastening to him, when his daughter, kneeling by his side, threw her arms around his neck and laid her fair cheek against his.

"Father—dearest father," she murmured caressingly, "do not let this grieve you! She knows all now, and understands."

"My darling child!" he cried again, drawing her closer to him. "Whilst I have you my sweet comforter, I shall have courage to face all!"

Mr. Carisforth begged them all to remain with him that night, but Lance, thinking that the exciting events of that day must have greatly tried his strength, resolved to return to the hotel. Herrick would accompany him and return later to Carisforth. Miss Sandbrook, at the earnest request of both father and daughter, remained.

It was dusk when the two friends reached the inn, where, greatly to their surprise, they found collected near the door a small knot of people whispering together.

"What can be the matter?" Lance was saying, when they were met by Mrs. Harper just inside the door.

"Oh, sir," she cried, "have you heard what a terrible thing has happened?"

"No! What? Tell us!" they both cried in alarm.

"It's Mr. Denzil, sir. His mare took fright at a traction engine and bolted with him, and she dashed against a wall and threw him right over her head. When they picked him up his neck was broken—he was quite dead!"

Mrs. Carisforth did not long survive her son. Although her seizure had not been of a serious nature at first, the shock of the news of his death, even though carefully and cautiously communicated later, resulted in a decline from which she did not rally.

Lionel felt that for the rest of his days, which could not now be many, he could not wholly part from his newly-found daughter, in whom he seemed to find again his long-lost and bitterly mourned wife.

So when Lance announced his wish to marry her, Mr. Carisforth consented with the understanding that the young people should live half the year at least with him at Carisforth, after they were married.

Once more, when their wedding-day arrived, were there great rejoicings in the village of Hillington.

Geraldine was never forgotten. When Geraldine the second and Lance are absent, Lionel walks in the garden with a constant companion, upon whose arm he leans, and their conversation is ever on that one theme; and this companion he calls "Hilary."

So he waits for the day to come when once again he and Geraldine will meet never more to be parted.

The End.

* * *

His Natural Mistake.

A well-known theatrical manager was watching his stage manager drill some "supers" who were to represent an army.

"Not a bit like it!" he exclaimed. "Why don't you try to look like real soldiers?"

The stage manager approached him.

"They are real soldiers!" he whispered.

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The Count's Revenge

(Continued from page three.)

had my children to do with my punishment?"

"You will soon understand, Monsieur de Beaufort, since I am about through with my explanations of the past, and will turn to the present, as well as make my demands as to what the future shall be. The child born to me by this woman of the streets turned out to be a daughter, and as some three years later your own daughter died, it naturally seemed as though Providence was favoring my plans. After the birth of the child I paid the woman the sum agreed upon and let her return to the life of dissipation she loved, having the police of Rome keep for me a faithful record of what she did, the days she spent in jail, the number of times she was sentenced for drunkenness, for soliciting, for theft. I knew you would be interested in this record some day, since it is the French custom to look into the record of the family into which one of your children marries."

With a muffled cry, Monsieur de Beaufort leaped to his feet, as of a sudden he understood the fiendish plan of his enemy. Count del Sarto was going to insist that his son, the innocent Hector, should marry the daughter of the fallen woman of Rome! Hoarsely he demanded, his eyes made large and wild with anguish:

"You surely don't mean that you intend forcing my son to marry——"

"My daughter, yes, Monsieur de Beaufort."

"I shall never consent to such a thing!" Of a sudden De Beaufort's voice became firm and resolute.

"You may not, but your son will. He is too proud of the family honor to hesitate a second about sacrificing his happiness to its salvation."

"I shall never tell him the sacrifice is demanded of him. Come what may, I will never consent to make him suffer for my fault."

"It will not be necessary for you to tell him, since I have already done so for you."

"You've told my son!" Monsieur de Beaufort leaped at Count del Sarto with the fire of madness in his eyes.

Count del Sarto rose to his feet, pushed the enraged man from him with a gesture as fearless as it was contemptuous, saying in the same calm, even tones:

"Should you kill me, my servant, who is devoted to me body and soul, would give out the cause for the deed, Monsieur de Beaufort, so I would advise you to control your temper."

De Beaufort backed from the fearless man who confronted him, realizing as he did the uselessness of the struggle. Count del Sarto continued:

"Before coming here, I sent a written account of the past, as well as a clear statement of the price of my silence, by special messenger to your son, who left this morning with Monsieur and Mademoiselle de Granville for the Grotte de Gargas. My messenger has instructions to give it to him before the return home, so he will have time to read it before returning to London. You'll know his decision before night, Monsieur de Beaufort."

With a calm born of his desperation, De Beaufort answered with resolution:

"Whatever is his decision, I can assure you, Monsieur de Narville, that I shall never consent to his union with the daughter of a woman of the streets. As well one disgrace as the other."

"The marriage of your son with my daughter would not be a disgrace, Monsieur de Beaufort, since my daughter has been raised a perfect lady, the name and title of Del Sarto, which I purchased with the castle of that name, is honorable, and only you will ever know of the disgraceful past of her mother."

"What could have been your object to have chosen such a mother for your child?"

"I knew you would ask that question. My object, Monsieur de Beaufort, was to force you to take in your family the offspring of the lowest woman I could find—you, who had tortured to death one poor, unhappy woman, because when she was only sixteen she had forgotten herself for one instant! The sin for which you made her suffer must bring you equal suffering, and I could think of no other way."

This refinement of cruelty showed Monsieur de Beaufort how useless all struggles would be. He fell back in his chair, asking:

"Does my son know this?"

"No, I did not tell, and if you are wise neither will you. No matter what her mother was, I am sure he would marry my daughter, and because he has done nothing to me personally, I am trying to spare him as much as possible. You are the only one I wish to suffer." Then taking his hat and cane, he continued in the most matter-of-fact manner, "My daughter arrives next week, and I shall take pleasure in presenting her to you and to your son next Thursday. Until then au revoir." And with a courteous bow, Count del Sarto walked to the door and left the room before Monsieur de Beaufort could say a word to detain him.

This capital story will be continued in the next issue of the Ledger. During the coming months many great stories will appear in these columns. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you if you send in a year's subscription. It costs you only $1.00, and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.

* * *

IMPRESSIONS.

Mrs. Kent watched her son Tom as he assisted Miss Sherwin into his motor car.

"I do wish that he'd fall in love with her and that she'd marry him," she said wistfully, as the car rounded the corner and Miss Sherwin turned and waved her hand at her hostesses. "And I believe Rhoda would if he'd just go at it right."

Her daughter, to whom Mrs. Kent was speaking, laughed.

"Did you ever know Tom to go at anything right?" she asked.

There, indeed, was the rub. Tom never did "go at things" right. While he was not of that odious fraternity that goes about boasting that it says "just what it thinks" and while he was not in the least vainglorious about this peculiarity, he simply could not help telling the truth disastrously.

"Sometimes I feel as if there were really something wrong with him," his mother used to mourn. "How can he be as intelligent as he seems and yet say the perfectly dreadful things that he does? You know, there are times when I'm really afraid he never will get anybody to marry him—that is, of course, any desirable person." This most unnatural fear shows her desperate state of mind.

Mrs. Kent had been quietly delighted when Rhoda Sherwin, the daughter of an extremely prosperous old friend, came to visit them and seemed to take a decided liking to Tom. Rhoda was desirable in every way. She was far from pretty in her refined, sinuous blondness, but she was most attractive, if you happened to be discriminating enough to admire her type. And then she would have plenty of money, and money was so convenient. Of course, nothing could have been more distasteful to Mrs. Kent than to have her son marry brazenly for money, but there was no reason why he shouldn't fall in love with a sweet, refined girl like Rhoda.

With utmost delicacy Mrs. Kent nursed the incipient love affair along. Her maternal hoverings were tactful and unobtrusive, her methods subtle. The attentions that Tom was gently guided into showing the guest seemed spontaneous.

The night before Miss Sherwin was to return to her home, Mrs. Kent, having sent her son and the young woman out for a moonlight stroll in the clear, cold beauty of a January night, retired to her Spartan couch in the sleeping porch, feeling that, whatever the outcome might be, she had done her best. The sleeping porch, by the way, was directly over the front entrance to the house. Hope rose high in her breast, as she went serenely to sleep.

Some time later she awoke. The first thing she realized was that her sleeping cap had slipped from over one ear. The second was that, owing to this fact, certain sounds were reaching her. There were two voices—one was soft and murmuring, the other clear cut and distinct. Instantly Mrs. Kent was on the alert. Casting aside all sense of honor, but retaining her multitudinous coverings as well as she could, she softly dragged herself up toward the railing of the porch. She could see Miss Sherwin's long, pale face uplifted to the sparkling winter sky.

With her chin pressed to the top of the railing, Mrs. Kent listened.

"I always wonder," Rhoda was saying softly, "about other people's minds, their thoughts, don't you know? If we could just know how people feel—really, what they think of us, for instance, it would be wonderfully interesting."

Mrs. Kent felt a pang of remorse. "If she does not marry him," she thought, "there will be times when she'll drive him mad with her sentimentality. She has no sense of humor; absolutely none But she's so—so—prosperous. At this point Tom's voice broke the stillness.

"Sure," he was agreeing with the young woman, obligingly. "I've often thought it."

"I wonder and wonder sometimes," Rhoda murmured on, "about the impression that I make on others. Now, you, for instance. I can remember my first impression of you so well. I said to your sister that I had never seen such a splendidly shaped head. It indicates such a mind, such intelligence, such depth, don't you know?"

Tom was nothing if not agreeable.

"Sure," he said again. "I know."

Miss Sherwin leaned forward and looked up tenderly into Tom's eyes.

"Won't you tell me," she said, "what you thought of me that first time we met."

Tom's frank eyes met hers frankly, though with a puzzled look in them. It was so pathetically evident to his mother, heroically freezing her chin on the railing above them, that he was trying his utmost to think of a proper reply. When his voice floated upward it was crammed with happy satisfaction.

"Why," he said, "I thought—I couldn't be sure about it for a minute—but I thought that you had the longest nose I ever saw on any girl."

The sound of his ringing laugh chilled what little warmth there was left in his mother's blood.

Miss Sherwin left the next day.

The very sensible, charming girl whom Tom married in due course of time had no worldly possessions, but she had a very keen sense of humor—which was well.

* * *

Good Will.

Two New York business men were one day discussing the purchase by one of them of a certain mercantile concern with which, the buyer explained, had come the "good will."

"I hope this 'good will,'" said the friend to the purchaser, "is greater than that of the old French farmer."

"I have never heard the story."

"Here it is: the farmer was dying, and he sent for the notary to make out the will. Propped up in bed, he dictated:

"'To Jean Marcel, our superb coiffeur, ten thousand francs.

"'I bequeath fifteen thousand francs to the fearless Alphonse Bayard, that he may continue his valuable aeronautical experiments.

"'To Pierre Deschamps, chemist, ten thousand francs as a mark of affection.

"'To my physician, Monsieur Leclair, fifteen thousand francs.

"'To our eloquent pastor, twenty-five thousand francs, to continue the restoration of——.'

"'But, my dear sir,' interrupted the notary. 'I don't believe you have all that money to leave.'

"'I know very well I haven't,' said the farmer, calmly, 'but I want to show them my good will.'"

* * *

Needed the Corks.

There is a lad in a certain Scottish town who is noted for his shrewdness The other day he was sent by his father to a neighboring public house with the following order:

"Please send to our house ten dozen of ale."

Now, it so happens that one of the publican's faults is a propensity to poke his nose into other people's business, and so, when he had read the order, he could not help ejaculating:

"Guid gracious, laddie, and whatever is yer fether gaun tae dae wi' sae muckle ale?"

For a moment Johnnie was puzzled, knowing that his father wouldn't like him to exactly tell the truth. Then an idea occurred to him and he quietly replied:

"I'm no verra sure, but I think he's gaun tae mak' a cork frame, and he'll need the corks."

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COPIES WEEKLY.

GENTLE JABS

Look not for peace in family jars.

Even a hotheaded man gets cold feet occasionally.

Some people could write all they know on a post card.

Why not quit seeking a position and look for a job?

What married man isn't fond of his wife's husband?

Some fools would rather lose a friend than an argument.

Some detectives try to disguise their breath with cloves.

Many a man who says nothing saws precious little wood.

Occasionally the unkindest cut of all is handed us by a butcher.

Success seldom comes to a man who is too lazy to meet it halfway.

Woman may be the weaker vessel, but man is more apt to go broke.

Opportunity knocks once, but envy is a continuous hammer wielder.

And many a weak woman can hold a strong man easier than her own tongue.

A man's appetite gives doctors an opportunity to experiment at his expense.

A mean rich man may jolly himself into thinking that his means justify his meanness.

Time may be money, but some men blow in a lot of coin in a vain effort to have a good time.

This would be a grand old world if men would pay their bets as cheerfully as they pay grudges.

The man who marries a pretty girl is apt to get the short end of it if he takes her at her face value.

The best thing a knocker can do for his home town is to purchase a railway ticket one way and use it.

There's always room at the top—and if it is a woman's letter, there's always room at the bottom for a postscript.

Perhaps many a man who boasts of his honesty would go lame if an opportunity worth while was to knock at his door.

That man has a powerful clutch on his high speed lever who can refrain from starting anything he knows he can't finish.

An old bachelor says he figured on taking a voyage on the sea of matrimony at one time, but fortunately missed the boat.

A woman's persistency is proverbial. She made a wrong start in the Garden of Eden, but she has been trying to get her rights ever since.

PEPPERS

Not What She Expected.

He was a shy young man, but on his way home from the city he managed to screw up his courage sufficiently to enter a jeweler's shop and purchase a small gift for the lady of his heart. This, he hoped, would pave the way to the popping of the great question. That night he called at her house and found her alone. Producing a small, square box from his pocket he said, nervously:

"I have ventured to bring you a small present, Miss Finn, but I am afraid that perhaps it will not fit your finger. Will you try it on?"

"Oh, dear!" said the girl, blushing most becomingly, "this is quite unexpected. Why, I never dreamed that you really cared enough——"

Poor fool! Instead of grasping the opportunity in both hands he opened the box and produced a thimble! Then the thermometer dropped about ten degrees.

* * *

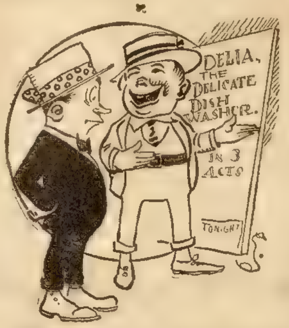
Her Wish.

The archbishop had preached a fine sermon on "Married Life and Its Duties." Two old Irish women were heard coming out of church commenting on the address.

"It's a fine sermon his reverence would be after giving us," said one to the other.

"It is indeed," was the quick reply, "and I wish I knew as little about the matter as he does."

* * *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TONIGHT

Hewitt—"You have to see a play more than once to appreciate it."

Jewett—"You have to see it more than once to know when to throw the eggs."

* * *

His Decision.

During some army maneuvers two officers of the royal artillery were disputing about the classification of a tree. One said it was a birch tree and the other an oak tree. They could not agree, so they called a gunner who was sitting near by, and asked him if he could tell them what kind of tree it was.

The gunner looked up and down the tree, walked all around it, drew his sword and began cutting it. The officers asked him what he meant by this behavior, when he looked up at them and answered:

"I am trying to discover what kind of tree it is."

Inspecting the gash he had made, with the air of a sage, the gunner at length delivered his long-expected verdict:

"It's a wooden one, sirs!"

* * *

Like Rain.

Professor Thomas R. Lounsbury of Yale is a foe to the purist and pedant, as his brilliant essays show. He who insists on saying "Tomorrow will be Thursday" will find no champion in Professor Lounsbury.

On a New England vacation the professor, gazing out across the lake one gray and sultry afternoon, remarked:

"It looks like rain."

A pedant was rocking in a rocking chair near by.

"What looks like rain, Professor!" he chuckled. "Ha, ha! I've got you there! What looks like rain?"

"Water," Professor Lounsbury answered coldly.

* * *

Careful.

In the deserted kindergarten room at the settlement a little girl was thumping the piano to her heart's content. A resident looked in at the door and smiled.

"Go right on, Catherine," she said, "if you're sure your hands are quite clean."

"Oh, that's all right, Miss Emily," was the answer, "I'm very careful; I'm just playing on the black keys."

* * *

A Money Maker.

Her exalted rank did not give Queen Victoria immunity from the trials of a grandmother. One of her grandsons, whose recklessness in spending money provoked her strong disapproval, wrote to the Queen reminding her of his approaching birthday and delicately suggesting that money would be the most acceptable gift. In her own hand she answered, sternly reproving the youth for the sin of extravagance and urging upon him the practice of economy. His reply staggered her:

"Dear Grandma," it ran, "thank you for your kind letter of advice. I have sold the same for £5."

* * *

Chewing the Rag.

Obadiah Gardner told the following story:

"I was in a small country store in Maine—my native State—one morning when an old lady accompanied by a gawky-looking girl of about 15 came in and asked the proprietor to show her some cheap calico.

"She pulled at one piece one way, then another, wetting it meantime and rubbing it with her fingers to ascertain if the colors were fast. She apparently was unable to satisfy herself regarding it.

"Finally she produced a small pair of scissors and snipped off a tiny piece, which she handed to the young girl.

"'Here, Emma,' she said, 'you chew on that an' see if it fades any.'

"Emma put the sample into her mouth and with the most serious expression imaginable went to work."

* * *

One or the Other.

Senator William P. Frye of Maine and Senator Charles Curtis of Kansas had been having a long and somewhat heated discussion as to the authorship of some of the works attributed to Shakespeare.

"Well," said Senator Frye with finality, "when I die and go to Heaven I will hunt up Shakespeare and ask him about it."

"Suppose you do not happen to find Shakespeare there?" suggested Senator Curtis.

"Then you can ask him," answered the Maine Senator, as he passed quickly out of hearing.

* * *

Would Not Ask Too Much.

Small Charlotte, not yet 4 years old, was gifted with so vivid an imagination that her mother began to be troubled by her fairy tales and felt it time to talk seriously to her upon the beauty of truthfulness. Not sure of the impression she had made, she closed with the warning that God could not love a child who spoke untruthfully and would not want her in Heaven.

Charlotte considered a moment and then said:

"Well, I've been to Chicago once and to the theater twice, and I don't s'ppose I can expect to go everywhere."

* * *

No Whistling on Sunday.

The late Dr. Macadam used to tell of a tipsy Scotsman making his way home on a bright Sunday morning, while the good folk were wending their way to the kirk. A little dog pulled a ribbon from a woman who was leading it, and as it ran from her she appealed to the first passer-by, who happened to be the inebriate, asking him to whistle for her poodle.

"Woman," he retorted, with the utmost solemnity of visage, "woman, 'tis no day for whustlin'."

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Aeroplane Tom

Or, In the World-Wide War

By HUGH HAMILTON

[Copyright 1914 by W. D. Boyce Co.]

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CHAPTER X.

THE KING'S MESSENGER.

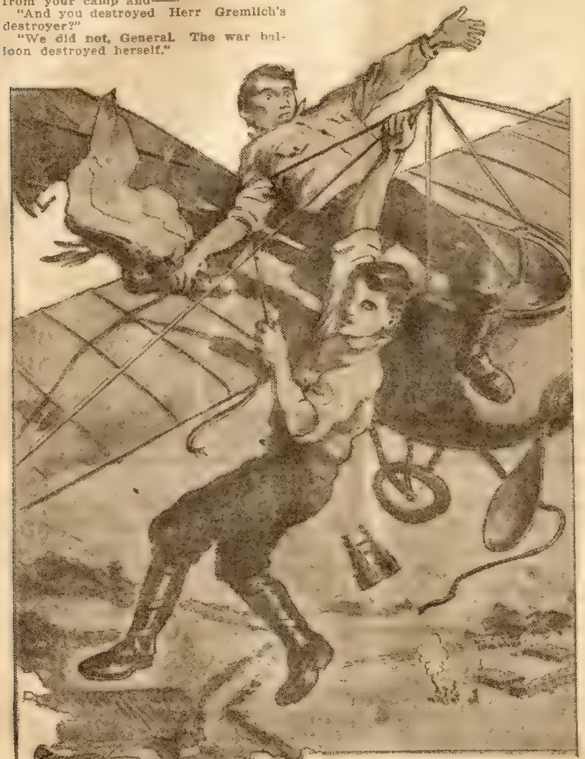
GENERAL VON TEUFEL of the German army was looking into Tom Chester's face.

"So," said he, and there was a twinkle in his eyes, "so you acknowledge having taken the aeroplane?"

"We took it, my friend Basil and I. It offered us escape from your camp and——"

"And you destroyed Herr Gremlich's destroyer?"

"We did not, General. The war balloon destroyed herself."



"We are gone, Herr Tom!"

Von Teufel blinked behind his spectacles.

"I don't make war on boys," said he after a brief pause. "What brought you into our camp?"

"I came to find a young girl who was abducted from Liege by a disappointed suitor."

"A love affair, I see."

"Not on my account, General," smiled Tom.

"Where is the young lady?"

"She has been pressed into your hospital corps."

"The proper place for fair hands."

"But she is not content. She desires to be back in the city."

The German commander took a pinch of snuff and scrutinized Tom from head to foot.

"That is the boy who robbed me of my plans in Liege!" cried a voice near by, and Tom turned to behold the man who had apprehended him but a short time before, Merdi's discarded lover.

"I picked up the plans which that man dropped," the young American put in, meeting boldly the mad gaze which had been fixed upon him. "All's fair in war, I thought."

"Quite so," answered Von Teufel, turning from the German spy. "I would have picked them up, too, being in your situation."

Tom remained silent.

"Really," pursued the General, "I don't think you are quite as black as you have been painted."

"Thank you, sir."

"I guess the best thing we can do is to get rid of you," smiled Von Teufel, "and therefore I am going to inflict a very severe punishment."

A shiver passed through Tom's frame.

"We are having a great war," the German went on with a stern look in his eyes, which boded the young aerial king no good. "I am going to make an example of you, sir."

"I do not think I merit death," Tom began, when an uplifted hand checked him.

"Wait till I am through. You shall leave this camp at once and with you shall go the young lady whom you want."

Tom started. Could it be so? Had he really heard correctly? Or was the German filling his heart with hope, only to dash it to earth desolate and hopeless? He was soon put at his ease, for in a few minutes Merdi was brought forward under guard, and they were ordered to be escorted to the edge of the German lines. This unexpected liberation, when he believed that he stood in the shadow of death, was almost too much for Tom.

Merdi, of course, was overjoyed.

The baffled lover and spy raged secretly, not daring to express his thoughts, and presently the reunited pair found themselves almost within the Belgian lines.

"I don't believe we have seen the last of my abductor," said the girl. "He is a man of evil and capable of doing anything to get possession of me."

"Which he shall not do if I can prevent," was Tom's answer.

"I shall be more watchful from now on. The kindness of General Von Teufel shall ever be a green spot in my heart."

"A true soldier is always a gentleman, Merdi."

The journey back to Liege was accomplished without incident.

The old jailer received his daughter with transports of delight and showered Tom with thanks.

"I advise you to thank General Von Teuful," the American boy spoke up. "But for his big heart we would not be in Liege at this moment."

"I have just heard of your escapade!" cried Tom's uncle when they suddenly met in the market place. "It was a foolish thing to do. Tell me what you saw of the German army——"

"I will not return evil for good. I did not enter their camp as a spy, but on an errand of mercy."

"Very well. I think your work here is ended. I am going to send you back to Leipsic."

Tom did not like this, yet he dared not complain.

"You will take the airship which you brought from the German camp."

"And fly back into the jaws of certain death?" cried Tom.

"How so, boy?"

"Did I not take the Swiftwing out without authority?"

"That is true."

"For me to go back is to be arrested, and you can readily see what would follow."

The old inventor hung his head, for Tom had put the matter to him in a light which he had not perceived.

"Stay, then," said he, as he turned away," but mind you, keep your precious head out of the boiling pot."

"If I can, sir," smiled Tom, rejoiced that he had won the tilt.

A boy may resolve and fail. He may make a thousand good resolutions and eventually find them useless.

Tom was startled when he heard Basil's story from his own lips. He learned that the French butcher and his wife had been dealt with according to military law, but he was not quite prepared for Basil's next remarks.

"I'm sorry for the couple because of the good frankfurters in the meatshop," said the Swiss boy. "I never tasted better. They always hit the right spot."

"But we will get no more like them, unless we find another shop where the same kind is made," rejoined Tom.

"I am going to scour Liege in search of just such an establishment, Herr Tom."

"Be careful that you don't run across another woman like Madame," and the two boys laughed in unison.

"I wonder when this war will end?" Basil said a little later.

"When the nations have devoured one another, I suppose."

That night Tom was aroused from his slumbers to see Colonel Calvay of the aerial corps standing before him. The boy rubbed his eyes to make sure he was not dreaming and waited for the Belgian to speak.

"I have come to conduct you to the King," was the startling announcement that set Tom's blood atingle.

"To the King?"

"Yes, to His Majesty."

Tom was still staring.

"I don't know whether he will order you to be shot or give you a commission."

"One might be as dangerous as the other," smiled Tom as he proceeded to dress.

They found King Albert in his tent within the Belgian lines and the pleasant-faced monarch smiled as Tom saluted. In another moment all attendants were ordered from the tent.

"I am going to entrust you with a mission," said Albert. "I have heard so much concerning your coolness in the face of danger that I believe you are the very person I should employ."

The boy's face reddened with pride.

"The French army is now on the march toward Liege," continued the King. "It is important that the head commander should receive my message at the earliest possible moment. Here is a map which will indicate about where you may expect to find the French."

Tom bent over the map, which was spread out on the camp table.

King Albert laid his finger on a certain spot and then sought the young aviator's face.

"Are you willing to undertake the mission?" he asked.

"I am at your Majesty's service."

King Albert took a small packet from his bosom and handed it to Tom.

"In case capture becomes inevitable,"

(Continued on page twenty-one.)

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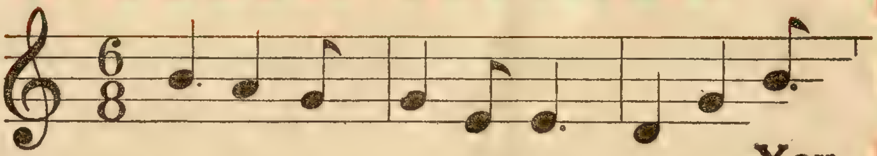

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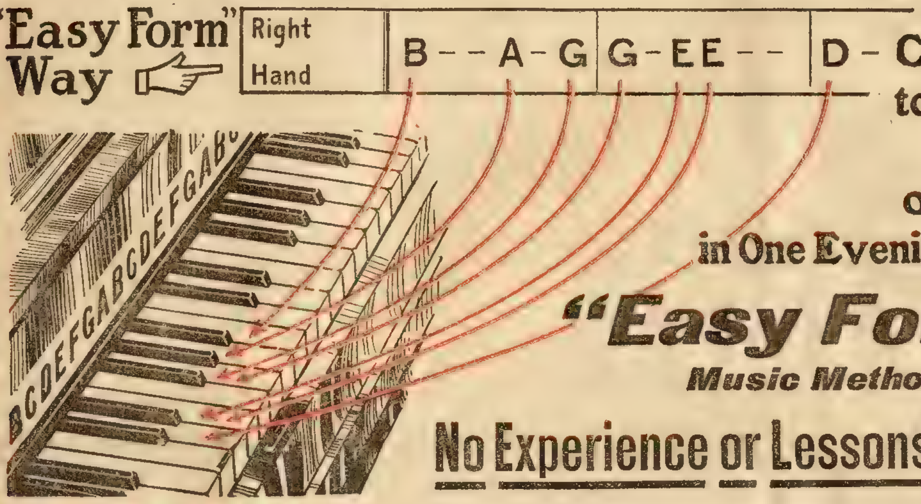

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Aeroplane Tom.

(Continued from page nineteen.)

he went on, "you will destroy this packet. Here is a string which you have but to pull and the thing is done. But I hope there will be no necessity for such drastic action."

Tom took the package and put it in his bosom.

"Take any airship you wish. The one you captured will do, if you understand its mechanism."

"I am thoroughly familiar with it, your Majesty."

"Well and good. The sooner you get off the better."

"I shall go at once, or as soon as I can find Basil, who is in another house."

Tom was escorted back to his own abode and then prepared to set out on the new mission. Basil was soon found.

"Oh, Tom," cried he, "I've found a new frankfurter shop. I scented it from afar and——"

"We've got something more important than frankfurters on hand just now," Tom interjected. "We are going in search of the advancing French army."

"Which means more Zeppelins, I suppose," moaned Basil. "Well, a fellow has to die sometime, but just when he has discovered a new frankfurter shop it looks bad! But I am with you, Herr Tom. If America and Switzerland can't outwit these pesky Germans nobody can."

CHAPTER XI.

THE AIR EAGLE'S FLIGHT.

"I call this a plunge into the unknown," exclaimed Basil when he and Tom soared gracefully over Liege, with its fortifications and embattling hosts, on the King's mission. "I am leaving the juicy frankfurters to meet what?—a Zeppelin, I fancy."

Tom Chester looked at his companion and smiled.

They had had no difficulty in getting started, for the captured aeroplane was perfect in every part and responded to its manipulator's hand as though it was endowed with reason. They had left the city at the breaking of a new day which was likely to see more bloody work in Belgian trenches, and the airship's nozzle was turned southward. They expected to intercept the French army on its march before many hours had passed, and already Tom was making use of his binoculars in search of scouting aeroplanes.

The earth beneath them teemed with harvests which cast a golden glow over the rich landscape, and here and there were pretty villages denuded of men folks, for the war had taken them, leaving but the women and children to reap the grain. This they were doing with patriotic zeal, for they feared that, should the Germans break through the Belgian lines, the wheat and corn would be trampled into dust and starvation would stretch his bony arm across the land.

Belgium is one of the most densely populated kingdoms on the face of the globe. It has been the battlefield of Europe for centuries, and it was on its soil that the great Napoleon met his overthrow at Waterloo.

These things came back to Tom's mind as the airship cut the ether and skimmed away like a gigantic bird, now dipping a little and now rising as though proud of her powers.

"We must find the French," ejaculated Tom, as he sat in his seat with glowing face and steady hands. "King Albert expects both of us to do our duty, as Nelson said to his soldiers at Trafalgar."

"But I think he might have filled our larder with frankfurters," humorously answered Basil as he smacked his lips.

The landscape for miles stretched out beneath them, forming a picture which no painter's brush could reproduce. Tom suddenly caught up the glasses and turned them toward the west.

"What is it, Herr Tom?" asked Basil, intercepting the action.

"Just a little black speck."

"Why don't you call it a Zeppelin at once?"

"I hardly think the Germans have advanced so far with their airbirds."

"Oh, we're liable to find the Teutons anywhere," and the Swiss boy became alert.

Tom studied the object with intense interest for many minutes and then slowly laid the glass down.

"Now don't get excited, Basil," said he in calm tones. "I have really sighted an aeroplane."

"Just as I expected."

The object momentarily grew larger. As it came on almost with the swiftness of a cannonball, it seemed to drive every vestige of air before it.

"I think they erred in giving us a craft without a quick firing gun," Basil remarked.

"But we have this," said Tom, laying his hand on a strange contrivance for sending forth a slender bomb filled with the most dangerous of explosives.

"But we have never tried it, Herr Tom."

It did not take long for the daring boys to discover that the plunging airship intended to overhaul them. They could make out nothing else.

It came on with a swiftness destined in the end to accomplish its object if it were not checked, and Tom glanced more than once at the bomb thrower.

"Is it German?" queried Basil.

"It certainly is not French," Tom replied.

"Then we're in for a tussle."

Their aeroplane, which they had christened the Air Eagle, was working perfectly. With eyes glued upon the coming monster, the boys held their breaths and waited. It was all they could do.

"How far will the machine cast the bomb, Herr Tom?"

"That I cannot say."

"It may be good only at very close quarters, in which event we may have the enemy down upon us when we are practically helpless."

Tom paid no attention to these words, for he was watching the aeroplane in silence. It was easily seen that the enemy possessed superior speed, and when it came a little closer it was found to contain four men. While it was not a Zeppelin it was built somewhat on the Zeppelin plan and was truly dangerous.

"We might escape her in the night," Tom observed. "We coud put out our light and get away, but as it is, we must have it out with her in some manner."

"Then the sooner the better," returned Basil.

Suddenly the strange craft darted to the right as if intending to flank the Air Eagle; then it seemed to change its course and come straight ahead again.

"Why doesn't she do something?" Basil cried from his perch.

"She will when she is ready."

And the airship soon got ready. All at once there was a puff of dark smoke in the bow of their antagonist and something hurtled overhead.

"Whew!" exclaimed Basil. "I felt the wind of that bomb."

"Too close for comfort," said Tom between his teeth.

A minute passed. The pursuer seemed to get new speed. It had the desire of a ravenous hawk of the upper deep.

"She's vengeful," Tom exclaimed, picking up the glass again. "My old friend Dunrider!"

"What, the fellow who is in love with Merdi?"

"Yes."

"Then launch the bomb!" shouted Basil. But Tom did nothing of the kind. He was as calm as a June dawn, his hand where it should be, and his eye taking in the thrilling scene. Like a true soldier he was waiting for the enemy to come within range.

"They intend to ram us," Basil suddenly exclaimed, his fears getting the upper hand.

Tom merely nodded. Such indeed seemed the intention of the thing crowding down upon them. They now plainly saw the crew on board, four stern-looking men, with Merdi's abductor in their midst, his fieldish face wreathed in smiles. All at once a voice reached their ears.

"Why don't you halt?" it said. "If your papers aré all right you can proceed."

A smile gathered at Tom Chester's lips. The demand was repeated.

"We will destroy you without mercy," said the same voice. "We have you in our hands now——"

"No," answered Tom. "I think the bird you want is still in the bush."

They saw the speaker in the bow of the airship turn to his companions.

"Now," said Tom in low tones. "We will see what we've got."

The bomb thrower had been already adjusted. There was nothing to do but to press the spring. There was a click and then a whir, and the bomb was let loose.

Never went an arrow straighter to its target. The missile struck right among the crew of the pursuer and the airship itself spun half way round. There was confusion on board.

Tom caught up another bomb and thrust it into the machine. The enemy despite the first shot was lunging on again. But it was seen that some damage had been done, for the thing swerved a little. Holding to one of the upright rods, stood Merdi's lover, his face colorless from wrath and his fist beating the air with rage.

Once more Tom pressed the yielding steel. There was another puff and a cry from the enemy's craft. Almost at the same time a shot from the foe cut through the Air Eagle, carrying away the spring of the bomb-gun, which brought a cry of horror from Tom's throat.

"We're done for!" cried Basil.

"But look at the enemy," answered Tom. "The last shot finished him."

There was now no resolution in the shaky thing a few rods away. It was spinning round like a crazy top. Now it was on its side and now half way overturned. Two men were clinging desperately to the damaged thing and one of them was Dunrider, a look of blank horror in his distended eyes. Suddenly the airship lurched like a doomed Titanic; there were two horrified shrieks, and the next second it shot downward, bottom upward, like a bolt. Tom leaned back with a heartfelt prayer.

"I guess the French will get King Albert's message," was all he said.

"And I'll dine on more frankfurters in old Liege!" grinned the thankful Basil.

CHAPTER XII.

ALL THINGS END.

THE destruction of the airship which our young aviators hoped would be the last one to be encountered on their journey, filled them with joy.

They picked up the glass again and scanned the heavens. Nothing was in sight. They were not in a very good plight to resist any more enemies since their bomb-gun had been put out of commission, an accident which left them practically defenseless.

Once more they turned toward the south, looking everywhere for signs of the French. Presently two aeroplanes were observed, almost in their very course and Basil sank back with a gasp. But after scrutinizing the objects Tom announced that they did not look like foes and continued his way.

"What if they should be Zeppelins?" asked the Swiss boy.

"But I am certain they are not," was the assuring reply. "The leading one looks Frenchy to me."

When they came nearer a hail in French brought the Air Eagle around and the boys uttered ejaculations of security. The two aerial scouts proved to be what they were supposed and the boys learned of the proximity of the French army. General Joffre was advancing to the succor of the Belgians at the head of a great force and Basil, upon hearing this, set up a far reaching shout.

"You must be careful," admonished the captain of one of the scouts. The Invisible is somewhere in this vicinity."

"The Invisible?" echoed Tom with a start.

"Yes, the strangest thing ever invented in the airship line. It seems to appear and disappear at will. Now you see it and now you don't."

"Like a magician's rabbits," said Basil.

"Exactly. We sighted her an hour ago and then she vanished like vapor."

"That's queer," Tom remarked, and, separating from the scout ships, the Air Eagle flew away.

"I don't like these air contraptions," said Basil. "They keep one in hot water all the time."

Tom did not reply, as he was busy looking over the flying gear of the aeroplane.

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Basil a while later. "Am I dreaming? Look, Herr Tom!"

The young American had alreadyseen.

A grayish-looking object had burst suddenly into view and so near them that Tom nearly lost his breath.

"It must be the Invisible!" he cried. "She contains but one man and he looks like the dead."

The sight had now frozen Basil into

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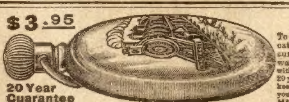

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speechless terror. Brave enough on the land, the Swiss youth sometimes lost his nerve when confronted by enemies in the air.

The thing came closer. The lone occupant, who wore a skull cap, was leaning forward scanning the Air Eagle with a pair of cavernous eyes.

"A madman!" ejaculated Tom Chester.

Suddenly the man was seen to rise to his feet and touch a part of the machinery. The gray terror shot upward.

"He will pounce upon us like an eagle upon a lamb," Basil cried.

"Nay," answered Tom. "He is making off as though all the furies were after him."

It was even so. The singular craft was soaring higher and higher and at last it vanished altogether.

"I trust we are rid of the thing at last," Tom remarked. "I don't like airships in the hands of madmen."

Some time afterward Tom handed the glass to Basil and told him to look southward and tell him what he saw.

There were darkish moving lines on the landscape below.

"It is the French!" cried the overjoyed boy.

"It can be nothing else."

They now shaped their course in the direction of the creeping things and soon perceived that they were approaching a vast army that toiled over the plain, stretching far on each flank, and all in battle array.

The gaudy colors of the marching host were easily visible; the cavalry thrown out on the flanks and the trains of artillery sweeping along in proper position.

"Look out!" suddenly exclaimed tom. "They are going to bring us down."

"With their cannon?"

"Sure."

"It's bad enough to be shot at by one's enemies, but to be peppered by friends——"

"Is not very pleasant, I admit."

The guns made for the purpose of shooting at aeroplanes had been brought into position, and as the boys were now directly over the French army, they had much to fear.

Tom drew forth a Belgian flag which he had brought from Liege and waved it frantically, but seemingly without effect.

"They are bound to put us out of business," Basil said.

The artillerists had surrounded the guns and presently they were seen to fall back.

Something spattered past the Air Eagle.

"It won't take more than two shots to wing us," Basil remarked hardly above a whisper.

The second shot struck the Air Eagle and she careened.

"We are gone, Herr Tom!"

There was no reply, for the aeroplane was sinking with all the gyrations of a crippled hawk. "Hold fast Basil!" Tom cried out.

"That I will, Herr Tom."

The Air Eagle was really falling, but not swiftly, for the air was buoyant and the craft was light.

The group of men about the cannon had increased. All faces were turned upward. The aeroplane struck the ground and seemed to fold up. Tom was the first to extricate himself from the debris.

"Who are you?" cried one of the French officers, seizing his arm.

"Where is General Joffre?" was the reply.

"Yonder, sir," and the Colonel pointed to a soldier seated on a horse in the midst of a brilliant staff.

"We are from King Albert of Belgium," Tom went on. "We have a dispatch for General Joffre."

"Sacre!" cried the French Colonel. "We might have killed you."

"But you would have got the dispatch all the same," grimly smiled the young air scout.

Tom and Basil were escorted to where the French commander sat, and the King's dispatch was delivered.

"I guess we are out of the frying-pan again," said Basil, after taking in the sight before him. "I long for the restaurants of old Liege."

It only remains to be said that the boys were ordered to join the advancing army and turn their faces toward the Belgian city. They were not averse to doing this after what they had passed through, and they made many jolly acquaintances among the French, who praised their heroism.

"I think I shall travel afoot after this," Basil remarked with a shrug. "Aeroplaning in war times doesn't agree with one's appetite."

Tom and the French soldiers laughed.

When Liege was reached the success of their last adventure was soon brought to the ears of King Albert, and the boys were sent for.

"Another commission, I suppose," said Tom.

"Really I hope not," Basil returned. "Liege is good enough for me."

After thanking Tom for his work King Albert decorated him with the Order of the Iron Cross and offered him free escort to Brussels, from which he could easily get out of the war zone.

Basil was given a similar decoration, of which he was very proud, and as he strutted about the streets of Liege his gaze was seldom removed from it.

"Herr Tom," he suddenly explained, "I know what I can do. If I get out of money I can trade this thing for frankfurters."

"And if you do, my boy, you will wish you had never left old Leipsic," was the rejoinder.

Here we must take leave of our aviators, who had become heroes in the allied camps. Merdi looked with pride upon both of them and told Tom that she would never forget her rescue from the Germans.

"What are we going to do now?" Basil asked one day. "It seems to me that our occupation's gone and——"

"Uncle Chester has offered me a new aeroplane."

"And they are building Zeppelins all the time!"

"Yes, Basil dear," and Tom laid his hand affectionately upon the Swiss boy's shoulder. "They are building Zeppelins, as you say, but that does not mean that we will fall into their hands. We'll have something to talk about when the world-wide war is over."

"Yes, when it is over," smiled Basil. "But when will that be?"

Next week's Ledger will contain a splendid story of circus life and adventure for boys, called, "From Ring to Ridge pole." It is a story showing how a country boy became one of the greatest circus performers in the world. It was written by a man who spent three years with a circus and knew what he was writing about. You will find it a good one.

The End.

School "Howlers."

Very merry and bright is the modern scoolboy's idea of history, judging from the list of joyous "howlers" published in a recent issue of the University Correspondent.

This periodical recently offered a prize of one guinea for the best collection of twelve amusing mistakes, and the result has been a whole budget of "howlers" calculated to make a stone dog smile. Here are some valuable bits of historical information:

"Finally James II. gave birth to a son, and so the people turned him off the throne."

"The courage of the Turks is explained by the fact that a man with more than one wife is more willing to face death than if he had only one."

"The Minister of War is the clergyman who preaches to the soldiers in the barracks."

"William the Conqueror defeated Childe Harold at the Battle of Hastings, which was so called because the English hastened away from their enemies."

"Julius Caesar was murdered at the Cinema House."

"When the last French attack at Waterloo proved a failure, Napoleon turned very pale, and rode at full gallop to St. Helena."

Among howlers on general subjects were the following:

"Ambiguity means telling the truth when you don't mean to."

"The flannelette peril means petticoat government."

"Much butter is imported from Denmark, because Danish cows have greater enterprise and superior technical education to ours."

"The mineral wealth of a country is ginger-beer and lemonade."

"A triangle is a square with only three corners."

These "howlers" might be supplemented by one or two sent by a Welsh schoolmaster:

"The principal vegetable and mineral products in America are tinned meat and borking strictors."

"The temperate zone is the region where no one drinks too much."

"'Name a town in Warwickshire.' Answer, 'Rugby.' 'Right. Next boy, another.' 'Association!'"

The English lesson is not altogther free from humor.

"The masculine of sultana is raisin; of heroine, kipper."

"Tne feminine of he-goat is she-went; of hero, shero."

"A corps is a dead gentleman; a corpse is a dead lady."

"Construct a sentence to show the use of tne word 'seldom'. 'My father bought some potatoes last week, but mother "seld 'em".'"

"To keep milk from turning sour you should leave it in the cow."

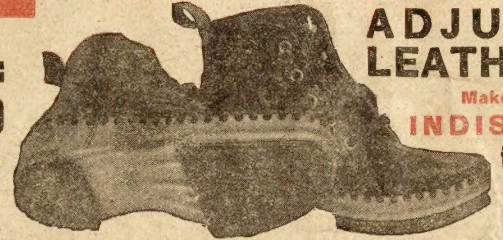
"To the question, 'How would you divide four potatoes among five persons?' came the answer, 'Mash 'em'."

* * *

In the West Indies the women act as stevedores in transporting salt from the wharves to the steamers.

FREE TEN-DAY TRY-ON
Ruthstein's Latest Triumph
ADJUSTABLE LEATHER TAPS

SAVE $10 to $20 a year on SHOE BILLS



Make My "STEELS" INDISPENSABLE to Every Man and Boy for Every Purpose

"Steels" mean All-day-comfort to Every Man or Boy. Can be worn from sun-up to sun-down.

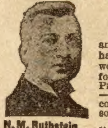
"Steels" do not absorb barnyard or stable filth and odors. Easy to wear—Easy to clean.

"Steels" protect the Man or Boy who can't pick his steps—make him tireless and sure-footed.

"Steels" keep the feet dry and comfortable in all weather—Protect health year around.

"Steels" with Adjustable Leather Taps can be worn at all times and places. They do not sweat the feet.

Health, Comfort and Economy Demand that You Wear "Steels"
The Lightest—and Only Absolutely Waterproof—Workshoe



N. M. Ruthstein
The Steel Shoe Man

The World's Greatest Workshoe

Twelve years of untiring effort and the expenditure of a Fortune have enabled me to produce a workshoe that surpasses all others for Comfort, Lightness, Protection, Practicability, Service and Economy—Absolutely Waterproof under all conditions—in all seasons—from season to season—for town or country.

It cost more than a half a million in cash to bring My "Steels" to their present perfection and make this offer and announcement to you today. I recently spent one hundred thousand dollars to improve my "Steels"—make them more comfortable—improving every part of the shoe—and to increase my capacity to meet the tremendously increased demand. My latest TRIUMPH Adjustable Leather Taps—make my "Steels" the Only Practical, General Purpose Workshoe.

Saved Millions for Workers

My "Steels" have saved to workers more than twenty million in shoe expense alone, and many Millions more in doctor and drug bills—in loss of time from sickness or bad weather—because no man or boy need fear to wear my "Steels" in the roughest storm—summer or winter—rain, snow, sleet, slush or mud.

Now, My "Steels" will save countless Millions more for the men and boys who see this advertisement—who will wear my "Steels."

My "Steels"—Best Health Insurance

Here is the only all-the-year-around workshoe ever invented. The shoe for every season—Cool in Summer—Warm in Winter—Dry and Shapely—always. They never Harden nor Waterlog, Scald the feet, Warp, Twist, or Leak.

My "Steels" absolutely protect the wearer from Rheumatism, Lumbago, Sciatica, Coughs, Sore Throat and other "wet-foot troubles."

My "Steels" are Foot-form-fitting—always keep their original shape. The Steel Sole is a Natural Arch Support. Nothing to Rub nor Chafe. Sure prevention and relief for Corns, Bunions, Callouses, Chilblains, and all Foot Discomforts.

My "Steels" are altogether the Best Investment you can make, Best for your Health—Best for your Comfort—Best for your Pocket-Book.

Leather-Tapped "Steels"—My Masterpiece

The Adjustable Taps of my New Model "Steels" are of firm, solid, special Process Leather, firmly attached to the wonderful sole of thin, wear-resisting, springy steel that has made my "Steels" the World's Greatest Workshoe.

Leather Taps Instantly Replaced

Then, when worn, the Leather Taps are instantly Removed—Instantly Replaced by any one—at home. The cost of New Taps is small—but 40c for a full set of better-wearing, more solid leather than is ever put into the best all-leather workshoes. They last three times as long as any other taps.

The Ideal General Service Workshoe

Here—At Last—is the Ideal Shoe for every Man or Boy. Not alone for the Farmer—not alone for the Dairy, Stock or Creamery Man—the Fruit or Vegetable Grower—but for Everyone who Works or Plays—Indoors or Out—in City, Town, Village or Hamlet—Forest or Field or Range or Road or Pavement—on Mountain or Plain—in Factory or Mine—for Mechanic, Laborer, Soldier, Shopman, Sportsman—for every man who Does Things—for Every Worker.

My "Steels" stand Alone—Supreme—The Greatest and Best General Service Workshoe the World has ever seen.

"Steels" in All Sizes for Men and Boys

"Steels" run in same sizes as ordinary leather shoes and rubber boots—and in all heights. Sizes for Men 5 to 12; 6, 9, 12 or 16 inches high—for Boys, Sizes 1 to 4; 6 or 9 inches high.

You Must Try My "Steels"

You cannot begin to realize the True Value of my "Steels"—you cannot know the height of Shoe Comfort, Economy and Protection—until you try and wear my "Steels."

You know, and I know, that the day of the Leather Workshoe is passing—that you must find something better—more Comfortable—more Lasting—more Economical—that leather workshoes are getting lower in quality and higher in price every year—that cheap workshoes are cheaply made—that even the most expensive will not last one full season.

My "Steels" are higer in grade and lower in price than any other workshoe—three to five times better value for less money.

The Sole of Steel
Steel Shoe Company

This Book FREE

Let me send this book to you by mail, postpaid. Read it and learn more of this great shoe with the sole of steel—the shoe with the light, springy, airy "step"—the shoe that rests your foot naturally and comfortably—always holding its perfect shape—never a "run-down" heel, broken arch, warped sole, worn toe, twisted uppers, or cracks or leaks. Before you think of buying a pair of workshoes, get this great book of shoe facts and learn about this wonderful, foot saving sole of seamless steel. Do not think of turning this page until you have sent for this free book.

Try "Steels" Ten Days at My Risk

I have spent a Fortune to MAKE GOOD every claim and every statement made for my "Steels." You cannot prove their worth to you unless you try my "Steels." You cannot profit by my years of effort if you lay aside this paper before writing to me.

I do not ask you to take my word nor the unstinted praise of the Million wearers of my "Steels." I'm asking you to TAKE YOUR OWN JUDGMENT—the evidence of your own Senses.

Just TRY my "Steels"—just send the coupon or a postal—ask for my FREE BOOK—ask for FREE DEMONSTRATION—FREE TEN-DAY TRY-ON—in your own home—on YOUR OWN FEET.

DON'T lay this paper aside until you have done what I ask—for your own good—for the sake of your Health and General Prosperity. You already know my reputation—ask any Banker—and Express Company or the Publisher of this Paper—they'll tell you I am absolutely reliable.

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Dept 71, Racine, Wis.

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We call the attention of every woman to the beauty of the patterns displayed from week to week, and wish to impress upon each one the splendid quality of material that makes our offer a great bargain in every case. Every offer is complete. You can finish it up without buying anything extra.

These designs are already stamped on best quality cloth, and every set comes to you complete, exactly as described.

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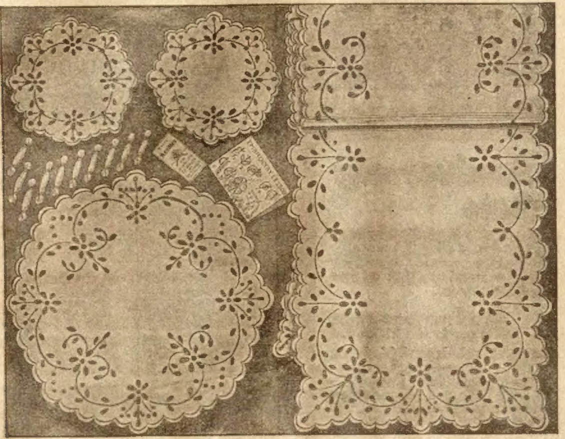

No. 11 P. B., Dining-Room Set.

NO. 11 P. B., DINING-ROOM SET.—Begin to make your Christmas presents early. Then you will have time to make something really worth while like this dining-room set. This exquisite set consists of sideboard scarf, size 17x44 inches; centerpiece, size 18x18; two doilies, size 9x9, all stamped on real Irish white linen; ten skeins of embroidery cotton, and one package of embroidery needles. Free with a $2.00 year's subscription to the Blade and the Ledger.

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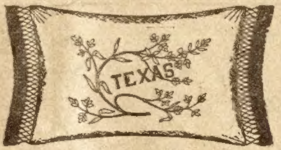

No. 10 P. B., State Pillow Top.

NO. 10 P. B., STATE PILLOW TOP.—Size 17x22 inches. The tops are hand-tinted in natural colors on ecru art ticking, having on them the name of any State you wish, with its emblematical flower. With each top is included a tan holland back and six skeins of colored floss for outlining. Given free with a $1.00 year's subscription to the Blade or the Ledger.

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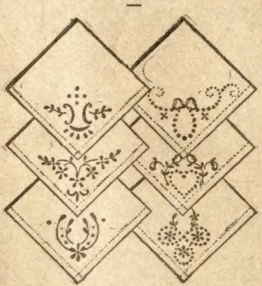

No. 12 P. B., Ready-Made Lawn Handkerchiefs.

No. 12 P. B., READY-MADE WHITE LAWN HANDKERCHIEFS.—They are appropriate gifts to make to any one, and the one receiving them will appreciate them much more if the giver takes time to put a bit of her own work in the corners. Here is a set of six ready-made lawn handkerchiefs, stamped with simple designs. Embroidery floss for working is included. Free with $1.00 subscription to the Blade or the Ledger.

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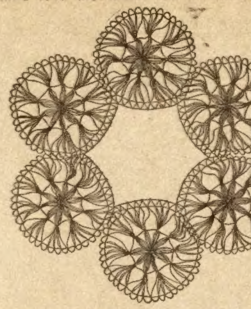
NO. 14 P. B., SET OF TWELVE TENERIFFE DOILIES.—Beautiful design and just the thing for table decoration, china closet or sideboard. This is an exceptional bargain. Just think—a whole dozen of these dainty doilies. If you cannot use them all, give a set to some frend as a holiday gift. We will send the whole set of twelve free with a $1.00 subscription to the Blade or the Ledger.

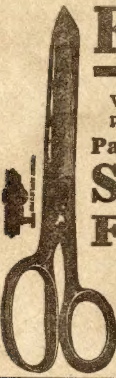


No. 14 P. B., Set of 12 Doilies.

* * *

Wife (severely)—"Drunk, as usual, John?"

John—"No, m'dear; drunker'n ushual."



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The Shears are seven inches long and the patent device keeps them always sharp and in perfect cutting condition.

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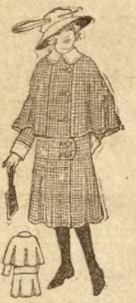
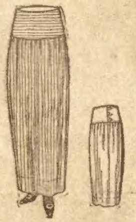
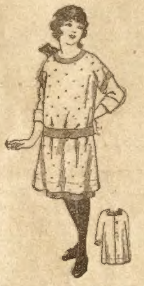


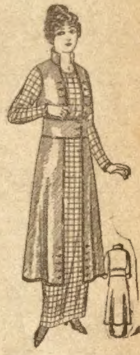
8408 Girl's Coat, 10 to 14 years.



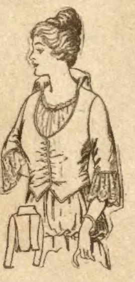
8407 One-Piece Skirt with Yoke, 24 to 32 waist.



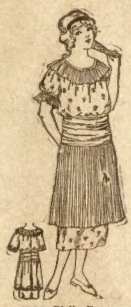
8394 Girl's Apron, 8 to 12 years.



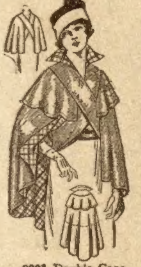
8409 Gown with Russian Tunic, 34 to 44 bust.



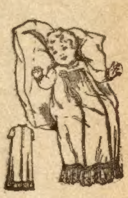
8406 Fancy Basque, 34 to 42 bust.



8399 Girl's Dress, 10 to 14 years.



8391 Double Cape, One Size.



8404 Infant's Robe, One Size.

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These patterns are the best that can be made. Each pattern gives full directions for the cutting and making with information as to the amount of cloth required, etc., so that any one can make any of the designs illustrated with no trouble at all. At the same time, they are so stylish and accurately cut that dressmakers and seamstresses all over the country will be quick to take advantage of this liberal offer. Some will subscribe for two years so they can get ten coupons. These designs are made by the best designers and modists of New York and Paris, and are up-to-the-minute in fashion and beauty.

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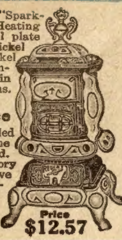

No. 8G854. New Model "Sparkling" Regent Hot Blast Heating Stove, of cold rolled steel plate with cast iron pot, cast nickel base and legs. Has fine nickel mica door and elaborate trimmings Body is 15 ins. in diameter, stands over 50 ins. high.

No Money In Advance

Don't miss this unexcelled bargain. It represents the best stove value ever offered. Will give years of satisfactory service and an attractive piece in any room—our Special Bargain Price..**$12.57**

$1 Per Month

Price $12.57

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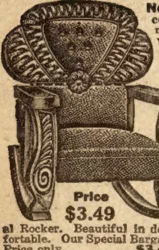

No. 1G773. A large, comfortable Rocker, made of selected hard wood, finished in a rich representation of real quartered Oak. Upholstered in Black "Imperial" leather. Strong, carved front posts. Seat is set on steel spring construction.

A big bargain at our price.

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Price $3.49

You will be delighted with this exceptional Rocker. Beautiful in design and most comfortable. Our Special Bargain Price only..................**$3.49** **50c Per Month**

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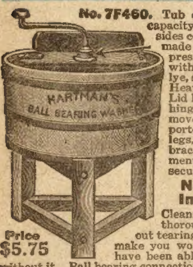

No. 7F460. Tub of eight shirt capacity, bottom and sides corrugated, and made of selected cypress, known to withstand effect of lye, soap and acids. Heavily varnished. Lid has detachable hinges, easily removed. Tub supported on heavy legs, very strongly braced. Improvement attachment securely fastened.

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Price $5.75

Cleans your clothes thoroughly and without tearing them. It will make you wonder how you have been able to get along without it. Ball bearing connections make washing so easy and rapid it is a pleasure to wash with this machine. Four-pronged dasher, large, strong, cannot split or crack. Why pay more when you can get this Washing Machine for our bargain price...**$5.75** **50c Per Month**

HARTMAN'S BIG BED OUTFIT BARGAIN

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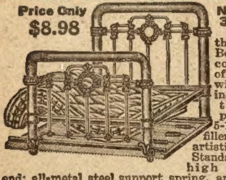

No. 3G1076. Complete three-piece Bed Outfit, consisting of Steel Bed with 1 1-16 inch, continuous posts and 5-16 inch fillers, very artistic design. Stands 58 ins. high at head end; all-metal steel support spring, and cotton top fibre mattress. This is a remarkable bed bargain; there is more quality in it than the low price would indicate. Can be ordered in white, pea green or Vernis Martin. Full size only.

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Another remarkable 60th Anniversary Bargain. This outfit is big bargain value at only..........................**$8.98** **75c Per Month**

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We Unreservedly Guarantee every article sold by us to be exactly as represented and described in our catalog.

We guarantee our prices to be lower than any other concern for goods of equal quality.

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No. 3G715. "Dixieland" Pure Felt Mattress. Made of selected pure felt treated so as to make it absolutely moth and vermin proof and is built, not stuffed. Felt used is almost white in color and is recommended for wearing qualities and wonderful resiliency. Has Imperial Roll edge and is covered with fancy flowered art ticking. Weight full 46 lbs. Recognized everywhere as the most comfortable, sanitary and serviceable mattress at anywhere near its price. No other concern can match our prices and quality. Our Special Bargain Price only......................**$5.95** **50c Per Month**

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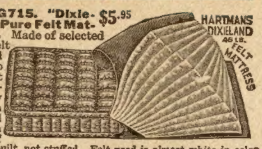

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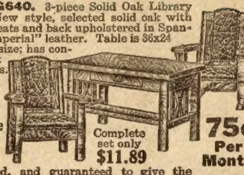
HARTMAN'S BIG LIBRARY SET BARGAIN

No. 5G640. 3-piece Solid Oak Library Set. New style, selected solid oak with chair seats and back upholstered in Spanish "Imperial" leather. Table is 36x24 ins. in size; has convenient drawers.



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Very artistically designed, and guaranteed to give the utmost in furniture satisfaction. This is a bargain you surely cannot afford to miss. For this 3-piece set our special 60th Anniversary price is only **$11.89** Return at our expense if not perfectly satisfactory.

Complete set only **$11.89**

75c Per Month

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Hartman's 60th Anniversary Bargain Sale

Just look at the grand bargains shown on this page, then remember they are offered to every reader of this paper on small monthly payments—so small that no one need hesitate to order what they want. These offerings represent only a small portion of our tremendous 60th Anniversary Bargain Sale now on.

No Money In Advance

During this price-smashing sale of guaranteed, dependable home furnishing goods, we ask no money with your order—no advance payment. Select any of these bargains you wish right from this advertisement if you like. Just write us to send it to you on approval. When it reaches you examine it carefully in your home, and if not the greatest bargain you ever saw, if not perfectly satisfactory in every way, just return it to us and we will pay the freight charges both ways. This is **Hartman's** square-deal plan. You risk nothing when you order from **Hartman's.** Did you ever have such an offer made to you by anyone else? **Hartman's** alone have such unbounded confidence in their goods that they make this fair, square and unequalled offer. We can afford to send only one of these specially advertised bargains to each family at these prices and terms, but when you receive our grand catalog you may select what you want, any amount on credit, and pay for same in small easy payments.

No Reference Required

Hartman trusts everyone. Sixty years extending credit to home folks everywhere has proven that the people are honest, and that they appreciate the Hartman credit plan. Millions of families now buy all their household furnishings the Hartman way. When you order from Hartman you need no references—no security—no mortgage—no guarantee. Nothing sent C. O. D.—everything on a wide-open, liberal, small monthly payment, credit plan. No collectors—no salesmen—no red tape methods—no waiting. Your credit is good for what you want, no matter where you live or what your income.

Hartman's Mammoth Souvenir Bargain Book

Don't fail to send right now for this astounding Bargain Book—absolutely the greatest published. Contains every article of household furnishings known to the industry, reproduced in exact colors—hundreds of things found in no other catalog. Assortment is so tremendous and complete that you can find just what you want at less than the price you expected to pay. Owning one of our wonderful catalogs is like having the greatest stores of America at your door. The great Hartman $10,000,000 purchasing power has been utilized to secure for you the most astonishing bargains ever before offered.

This is your grand opportunity to save big money. Don't miss it—send your name and address on a postal today and get Hartman's free Mammoth 60th Anniversary Bargain Book.

HARTMAN FURNITURE AND CARPET CO.
3926 Wentworth Ave., Chicago, Ill.

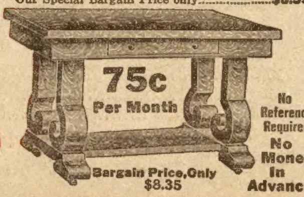
No Money In Advance
No Reference Asked

HARTMAN'S LIBRARY TABLE BARGAIN

No. 5F6116. This beautiful library table of selected hard wood, finished American quartered oak. Thoroughly substantial construction. Expertly finished. High gloss, hand rubbed polish. Large 28x42 inch top. Big roomy drawer.

Base has artistically shaped feet. **Striking Colonial** pattern. Is right in style.

Value cannot be duplicated under $13.00 to $15.00. Our Special Bargain Price only......................**$8.35.**



75c Per Month

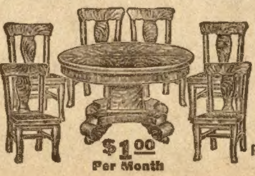
Bargain Price, Only $8.35

No Reference Required No Money In Advance

HARTMAN'S DINING ROOM SET BARGAIN

No. 4G657. Elegant Dining Set consisting of table and six chairs. Table is made of Solid Oak in beautiful Colonial design with 10 inch square pedestal, supported by strong platform and scroll feet. Has 45 inch top, which opens to 6 feet when extended, and deep box rim. Chairs are of solid oak, with genuine quartered oak back and top panels. Have GENUINE LEATHER BOX SEATS, 18x17 inches. Price of set of seven pieces, complete **$21.25.**

No. 4G658. Six chairs alone **$10.67** **75c Per Month**
No. 4G659. Dining Table alone **$10.89**

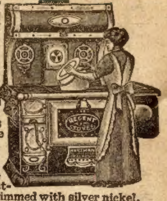


$1.00 Per Month

No Money In Advance No Reference Required Remarkable Value

HARTMAN'S BIG RANGE BARGAIN

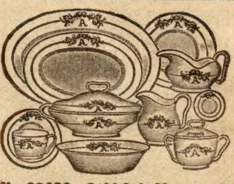
No. 8G674. 'Merit' Regent Steel Range. Made of finest cold rolled blue steel and constructed to last a lifetime.



No Money In Advance

Has large oven, 16x18x12 ins. in size; duplex grates in large fire box, improved flue system and steel high closet as shown. This Range will give you complete and lasting satisfaction. Trimmed with silver nickel.
Price, with reservoir......**$29.75**
Price, without reservoir.**$23.75**
$1.50 Per Month

HARTMAN'S BIG DINNER SET BARGAIN



No. 6G630. Gold Coin Monogram 100-Piece Dinner Set $10.65.

Another remarkable value, that you will do well to order direct from this page. Gold coin decorations with your (any one) initial as in illustration. You will be thoroughly delighted with this Dinner Set. It is very dainty in style, and is sure to please.

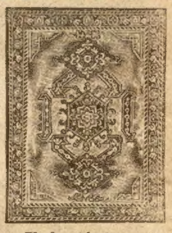
No Money In Advance

Double fired and glazed decorations, warranted not to come off. 100 pieces to the set or complete service for 12 persons. Our Special Bargain Price **$10.65** **75c Per Month**

HARTMAN'S BIG BRUSSELS RUG BARGAIN

No. 0G1562

Elegant Seamless Brussels Rug, 9x12 feet, woven of selected yarns in a choice pattern. Medallion center and neat border. Colorings of harmonious blends of Tan, Brown, Red and Green. A most exceptional floor covering.

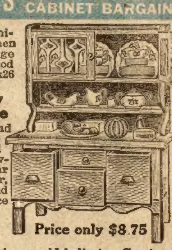


No Money In Advance

Do not confuse this rug with the ordinary kind. This is a very beautiful and durable Rug and will last many years. We do not hesitate to say that you will get thorough satisfaction and solid comfort out of this Rug. A great bargain at......**$11.75** **75c Per Month**

HARTMAN'S BIG KITCHEN CABINET BARGAIN

4G656. Convenient solid oak Kitchen Cabinet with large sanded whitewood table top. 42x26 inches.



No Money In Advance

Has sliding bread board, china cupboard with grilled doors, utility drawers, flour and sugar bins, cake drawer, handy shelf and plenty of space throughout. This is a cabinet of a quality far better than our extremely low price would indicate. Construction is of the very best throughout. Immense value for **$8.75** **75c Per Month**

Price only $8.75

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